

News 9

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CONNECT with Parents	CWK in Your Area	CONNECT! in Schools	
<div data-bbox="269 598 506 777"></div> <div data-bbox="522 598 1164 642"><h2>Meditation Lowers Blood Pressure</h2></div> <div data-bbox="522 648 768 714"><p>By Yvette J. Brown CWK Network</p></div> <div data-bbox="277 783 498 812"><p>Click Image for Video</p></div> <div data-bbox="660 877 1055 905"><p><a href="#">Tipsheet</a>   <a href="#">Related Information</a>   <a href="#">Resources</a></p></div> <div data-bbox="272 984 1185 1119"><hr/><p><i>“When the body becomes more rested, it has a chance to throw off stress and strain, repair itself, to bring the blood pressure back to normal.”</i> - Dr. Vernon Barnes, study author/physiologist, Medical College of Georgia -</p><hr/></div> <div data-bbox="256 1167 1195 1232"><p>Nick Fitts was a troubled teen with problems at school and at home with his mother.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1270 1099 1306"><p>“I was stressed out to the point where I was always angry,” he says.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1341 672 1375"><p>His blood pressure was climbing.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1413 1154 1480"><p>“I was headed down the wrong path,” Nick says. “My health wasn’t good and I wasn’t mentally ready for anything I was facing.”</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1518 719 1549"><p>But meditation turned his life around.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1587 1170 1654"><p>Nick was asked to participate in a study of teens with high blood pressure and the impact of transcendental meditation on their health.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1692 1104 1791"><p>“The bottom line is that we have shown that meditation lowers blood pressure in teens,” says Dr. Vernon Barnes, physiologist and lead researcher.</p></div> <div data-bbox="256 1829 1175 1887"><p>The 156-teenagers were separated into two groups. Nick’s group, learned to meditate, the other group, took health education courses</p></div>			<div data-bbox="1252 541 1495 758"></div> <div data-bbox="1252 793 1495 1010"></div> <div data-bbox="1252 1045 1495 1262"></div>

to meditate, the other group, took health education courses.

Blood pressure levels dropped from borderline hypertensive into the normal range for those who meditated. There was no change for the other students.

Dr. Barnes says meditation quiets the mind *and* body.

“The body becomes more deeply rested and when the body becomes more rested it has a chance to throw off stress and strain, it has a chance to repair itself, to bring the blood pressure back to normal,” says Barnes.

Lowering blood pressure is crucial. Barnes says adults who reducing their blood pressure even slightly can reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke by 40-percent.

Experts say a healthy diet and exercise are sure ways to lower blood pressure, meditation might also be an option but check with your doctor to be certain.

Nick says meditation saved his life.

“I didn’t even know,” he says. “That’s the bad thing about it. A lot of people don’t know they have [high blood pressure]. Look at what could have happened to me.”

### Related Information

By Larry Eldridge, Jr.  
CWK Network, Inc.

Stress is one of the leading causes of high blood pressure. While stress may be considered an “adult occurrence,” the truth is that many kids face a great deal of stress. As parents, we may not be aware that our children are under stress, because kids may not be open to talking about it. Experts at **Know!** have developed a list of characteristics that could indicate a child is stressed. Be on the lookout for any of these behaviors:

- Low self-esteem
- Little energy
- Short attention span
- Often sleepy
- Extremely hyperactive
- Often depressed
- Inactive
- Often misbehaves
- Angers easily
- Fights frequently
- Easily frustrated

- Easily frustrated
- Uses adult sexual terms
- Says bad things about self
- Refuses to do what he or she is told
- Walks unsteadily
- Makes strange voices, grunts, growls, snorts, etc.
- Cries easily
- Sulky
- Detached and unresponsive
- Uncommunicative
- Change in eating habits
- Mood swings
- Increased defiance/rejection of authority
- Change in appearance and personal hygiene
- Change in personality
- Abusive to siblings
- Falling grades
- Talks back

### What Parents Need to Know

By Larry Eldridge, Jr.  
CWK Network, Inc.

In many instances, medication is an option to lower blood pressure caused by stress. Even if your child takes medication, there are many other things that parents can do to help their children learn to manage stress. Experts at **TheCenter for Effective Parenting** offer these suggestions:

- **Be aware of protective factors.** Why is it that some children seem to handle stress well, while others do not? Research indicates that there are many differences between children who do and do not handle stress effectively. Children who manage stress well tend to have good self-esteem, a sense of humor, a perception of control over their lives, a consistent family structure (rules/limits), a cohesive family, open family communication, a warm, supporting relationship with their parents, good relationships with friends and teachers, a religious affiliation, and receive positive recognition for their achievements.
- **Help your children develop an awareness of the signs of stress** . Different children exhibit different symptoms of stress. These symptoms often depend on the child's age, personality and level of development. A child's body actually provides clues that may indicate he/she is under too much stress. These clues include a tight throat, sweaty palms, headaches, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, uneasiness, indigestion, depression, restlessness, frustration and a change in sleeping patterns. Other possible symptoms include withdrawal, irritability, aggression, excessive daydreaming, excessive sensitivity, changes in eating habits, and general

excessive sensitivity, changes in eating habits, and general changes in behavior. Parents and children who learn to recognize these stress signs have taken the first step to combating stress.

- **Prepare your children for potentially stressful situations.** Parents should take time to prepare their children for potentially stressful situations by rehearsing possible scenarios. For example, if a child is feeling stressed because of a conflict with a friend in school, parents should encourage the child to role-play with them. Together, you can practice a conversation that your child might have with this friend to resolve the conflict.
- **Avoid overprotecting your children.** Sometimes it's hard for parents to watch their children deal with stressful situations, since our first instinct is to protect them from the stresses of life. However, stress is unavoidable in life. Parents are doing a disservice to their children if they always try to protect them from stress. Children learn how to cope with stress only by experiencing it.
- **Build your children's self-esteem.** Parents should help their children gain confidence in handling problems by giving them responsibilities and letting them make decisions from an early age. Parents should also help their children develop interests in which they can succeed. Remember to offer your children true encouragement and praise.
- **Provide support and reassurance.** Parents should be available when their children are experiencing stress. You can provide lots of hugs, pats on the back, kisses, etc. to let your children know you are here for them, and you understand that they are having a difficult time. Having a warm and supportive relationship with a parent is one of the single best predictors of how well children will cope with stressful situations during childhood.
- **Provide an environment with open communication.** Parents should be available to listen when their children need to talk. They should ask open-ended questions (e.g., questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no") to help their children discuss difficult subjects. Examples of open-ended questions include, "What do you think about ...?" and "How does [fill-in-the-blank] make you feel?" One of the benefits of talking about stressors is that it makes you both more aware of what can trigger stress. Parents should be willing to share some of their own stresses to let their children know (without worrying them) that these feelings are normal.
- **Make sure your children get enough sleep.** Children who do not get enough sleep will not have the energy to combat life's stresses. Experts recommend eight to 10 hours a night for middle school and high school students. Just as important is maintaining a *regular* bedtime. Getting enough rest is critical to children's mental and physical health.
- **Model appropriate coping skills.** Children learn by watching their parents. If children see their parents using appropriate coping skills when they are under stress, they will be more likely to use those skills, too. Try to demonstrate that stress is normal and can be

skills, too. Try to demonstrate that stress is normal and can be handled in a calm and effective manner. Try to be optimistic, viewing a stressor as a challenge rather than a catastrophe.

- **Have your children learn relaxation skills.** Relaxation skills can help children release tension caused by stress. There are a variety of specific relaxation techniques that professionals can teach children. Some involve children using their imagination to recall or create positive and relaxing images (e.g., playing outside, being at the beach). Other relaxation techniques involve systematically tensing and relaxing various muscle groups. Relaxation techniques should be practiced on a daily basis to be most effective. The type of technique your child uses isn't what's most important; what's necessary is that your child is comfortable with it, it works, and he/she can stick to it. Parents who think their children might benefit from relaxation training should ask their health care provider for a referral, or look for a class such as yoga or meditation geared to kids.
- **Teach your children how to handle criticism.** All of us receive criticism at one time or another. A person who has difficulty accepting criticism will likely feel stressed. Children are often exposed to criticism at an early age, such as peer teasing or constructive feedback from teachers and parents. Teach your children how to handle criticism. Remind them that no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, and we can learn from our mistakes. Use role-playing to teach children how to handle teasing and unfair criticism.
- **Provide proper nutrition.** Proper nutrition is a very important part of combating stress, especially for children. The best diet to help children handle stress is one that is balanced, has few additives, and has the right amount of calories to maintain normal development. Encourage children with poor diets (unbalanced, high in junk food) to decrease their intake of foods high in fats, cholesterol, salt and refined or processed sugars. Limit the amount of junk food and caffeine. Encourage your children to increase their intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And, parents whose children are overweight should consult their children's health care provider for recommendations regarding weight loss.
- **Provide a consistent routine or schedule.** Children need predictability in their lives. A consistent schedule of meal times, homework time, bed time, etc., allows children to know what to expect in their lives. This helps them feel secure and reduces stress.
- **Help your children *reframe* stressful situations.** Children have control over the way things affect them. Their *perception* of a stressful situation helps determine how much they let it affect them. Help your children develop alternative interpretations of the things that cause them stress. For example, if a child thinks his teacher doesn't like him because she didn't say hello to him this morning, a parent can ask the child to come up with other explanations for his teacher's behavior. Perhaps the teacher was busy thinking about

teacher's behavior. Perhaps the teacher was busy thinking about something else and forgot to say hello. This is an example of **reframing** a stressful situation. The key is for parents to help their children come up with alternative and more positive interpretations of stressful situations. Of course, it's not possible to reframe every stressful situation. There will be times when the stress children perceive in a situation is quite real. At these times, it is necessary for parents to help their children cope with the situation in other ways.

- **Help your children alter their beliefs about stressful situations.** Children's beliefs have a major impact on how they behave, who they choose for friends, what subjects they study in school, etc. Children's beliefs also determine, to a certain extent, what will and will not be stressful for them. Sometimes certain beliefs lead to increased stress. In these instances it's a good idea for parents to help their children change those specific beliefs. For example, children who believe that they must get an A+ on every homework assignment will experience stress whenever they get a lower grade. Parents can help their children alter this belief, and come up with a new belief that allows for imperfection.
- **Encourage your children to participate in enjoyable activities.** When children are experiencing excessive stress, encourage them to take part in activities they enjoy (e.g., sports, listening to music, playing a game, art, reading). In order for an activity to reduce stress, it must be enjoyable and take their mind off their troubles.
- **Encourage your children to get regular exercise.** Exercise is an excellent way to help manage stress. It helps eliminate tension that can build up in children's bodies. It also increases physical fitness, which allows children's bodies to be more efficient at combating stress. And, exercise helps clear the mind, making it easier to relax. The only way exercise is effective in combating stress, however, is when it is done regularly. Don't worry about the specific activity; just make sure that your children enjoy it. Also, children will be much more likely to exercise on a regular basis if their parents exercise regularly and are physically fit.
- **Help your children develop good problem-solving skills.** When children face a significant problem, parents should take the opportunity to teach effective problem-solving strategies. Start by helping your child clearly define the exact problem. Then, ask your child to write a list of possible solutions (not evaluating them at this stage). Then have the child go through each possibility and evaluate its potential for success. Once all the solutions have been evaluated, parents should encourage their children to choose the best solution. Encourage and praise your children using effective problem-solving strategies.
- **Help your children learn to manage time.** Parents should help their children learn how to prioritize activities. If children have a tendency to take on too much responsibility, parents should help them learn to place limits on their commitments. Parents should also help teach their children how to schedule their time (e.g.,

also help teach their children how to schedule their time (e.g., specific time for homework) so they can get things done.

- **Teach your children to be assertive** . Children who are afraid to stand up for themselves tend to have difficulty handling stressful situations. Parents can help by role-playing situations and teaching their children how to stand up for themselves in an appropriate, non-aggressive manner.
- **Develop your children's sense of humor**. Children who can see the humorous side of things and can laugh at themselves tend to handle stressful situations more effectively. Parents should teach their children not to take things too seriously. Laughter is the best medicine!
- **Get professional help if your children continue to have difficulty coping with stress**. There are times when professional help is necessary to teach children how to handle excessive stress. Consult with your children's health care provider for recommendations.

## Resources

[U.S. Department of Education](#)  
[National Parent Teacher Association](#)  
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<http://stress.about.com/cs/childhoodstress/a/stresskids.htm>

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# Childhood Stress Leads to Depression, Anxiety in Adulthood



From [Melissa C. Stöppler, M.D.](#),  
Your Guide to [Stress Management](#).

Stressed children are more likely than their peers to suffer from depression and anxiety disorders in young adulthood, according to researchers.

Doctors at the Center for Demography and Population Health at Florida State University studied over 1800 individuals ranging in age from 18 to 23 years who had participated in a previous study as young adolescents. Study participants comprised an ethnically diverse group with both genders equally represented. Interviews were conducted to ascertain the number of potentially traumatic stressors experienced during the course of their lives as well as to record current symptoms of depressive and anxiety disorders.

Cumulative lifetime stress and adversity were found to be associated with an increase in the development of depression and anxiety disorders in the young adult population.

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These data, published in the May 2004 issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, suggest that stress in children may have significant long term effects on emotional and mental well-being.

For more information, see the resources on [childhood stress](#) and [parenting stress](#) on this site.

## Reference

Turner RJ, Lloyd DA. **Stress burden and the lifetime incidence of psychiatric disorder in young adults: racial and ethnic contrasts.** *Arch Gen Psychiatry.* 2004 May;61(5):481-8.