



Teaching Children/Youth Coping Skills for Stress Management

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"Your Body Changes with Stress."

Within this lesson children are taught to name and demonstrate body change. For example, the teacher introduces the "sad" feeling and says, "When you are sad you might cry and your eyes get red and swollen and you make a frown.

Teacher demonstrates body changes

for children to see, then children imitate the sad feeling. They learn that body changes are called stress.

COPEE
BEAR SAYS!...



I'M A
GOOD PERSON

"Deep Breathing and Relaxation."

The children participate in exercises to relax their bodies through deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and imagery relaxation. Numerous breathing exercises are supplemented with art, science, and manipulative activities, as well as dramatic plays, which have children involved in role playing and deep breathing when they are sad, mad, scared, and happy.

The Muscle relaxation techniques are similar to those you may have read about for adults, but they are well-explained and demonstrated to children. Fun muscle/tension games are included. With a Great deal of discussion and involvement, children learn positive image relaxation. It is very important to equip children with skills that help them become adequately prepared to handle the stress in their lives effectively and to improve their decision-making and problem solving skills.

The Pre-School Stress Relief Project is designed to teach children coping skills early to equip them to deal with life's stressful events in a healthy manner that leads to wellness in our society. Primary prevention is defined as lowering the incidence of emotional disorder by reducing stress and promoting conditions that increase confidence and coping skills (Albee and Gullotta, 1992) Stress cannot be taught to

show one how to positively deal with it.

Young children cope with many things. It can be excitement of going to a birthday party or receiving a new puppy. Or it can be coping with family separations or the anger of trying to accept a new baby to the home. All of these are examples of situations which may be stressful. That stress can be positive or negative. It can be the "spice of life" or it can be associated with life's pressures and tensions. Both good and bad stress can cause one's body to respond to change.

Parents can help children learn to cope

with stressful situations such as

these by preparing the child for

change whenever possible. This will give the

child time to adjust. Children are sensitive

and may sense that changes are occurring and

worry even more if they are not properly

informed and prepared for change. Remember

that children are resilient; they can bounce

back and handle situations a lot better than

we give them credit for. Be honest with the

child about what is going on.

When explaining

*stressful situation to the
child, (continued...)*

always be truthful.

Provide the child with

*extra security before
potentially stressful*

situations.

Teachers see children handling stress in different ways. Two children may respond to a classroom visit from Smokey the Bear (person dressed up in a bear costume) in two distinct ways. One may be fascinated, the other terrified. Within this situation, the first child might show outward emotions by a smiling face or by jumping up and down with excitement, while the second may withdraw and show signs of fearfulness or nail biting.

*Teachers can help children
to cope with*

*happy and scared emotions
by talking with*

*children about their
feelings and concerns.*

*Allow children to express
their own*

*feelings as you listen
with an open*

*mind. Let them know that
you are*

*concerned about their
feelings.*

In today's fast-paced society children are

faced with more stressors than ever before.

They must cope with increased rates of divorced, child neglect, negative community environmental conditions and substance abuse. When stress is over-whelming, children seek relief. One child may act out negatively while another may turn inward.

Stress and the inability to effectively manage it can lead to alcohol and other drug abuse.

There is a relationship between stressful conditions and substance abuse, and alcohol and other drug use are learned responses to stress. Therefore, it is very important to equip children early with skills that help them to effectively cope with the stress in their lives. The results of the lack of positive coping skills for children/youth can carry over to later years, where statistics indicate a sharp rise in substance abuse, crime, violent acts and suicide.

Parents and teachers can help children to

express anger positively. Children have a

right to feel angry or upset. Allow them the

opportunity to express their feelings. Teach

positive ways to release anger. They can

punch a pillow (teaches children to punch

soft things that does not hurt themselves or

*others), count to 10,
talk to someone about*

*angry feelings, go for a
walk, or take time*

*out to rest and relax.
Positive anger*

*releases gives the child
time to accept*

*his/her anger and not
hurt themselves and*

others in the process.