

people who can help. Contact your local community health centre or ring Parent Line on 13 20 55.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

You can find more health information in your language on the Multicultural Communication website at <http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>



English
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Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.

Stress - it affects children too

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NSW HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Stress - it affects children too

As adults coping with family responsibilities and problems such as too much work - or too little - it's easy to forget that children also have pressures in their lives that cause stress. Stressful situations are a normal part of life - they can help both adults and children learn how to solve problems and become stronger people. But too much stress can cause problems.

As parents we have to perform a difficult balancing act. On one hand we need to help buffer children from the effects of too much stress - but we also need to give them the chance to meet challenges and solve problems by themselves. Here's some good advice compiled with the help of Contact, an organisation which provides information, referrals and support for parents and other carers of children.

School means opportunities for learning and making friends. But it can also mean things to worry about like homework, tests, and worries about relationships - it's common for children to worry about being liked and accepted by other children. Parents can help by taking an interest in what happens at school every day (not just in the classroom, but in the playground too), by praising their efforts and by encouraging them, and not putting too much pressure on them to get top grades.

Organised sports can cause real anxiety for some children when there's a lot of pressure on them to win. Teach children to take part for the sake of enjoyment - not just to win or please you. Praise their efforts - especially if they or their team loses.

Encourage children to welcome changes in their lives, rather than fear them. You can help by providing them with new experiences and activities, and always giving them your support.

Give children the chance to solve problems for themselves sometimes. Jumping in and solving problems for them may seem like a caring thing to do (and sometimes it's the easiest). However, in the long run it makes it harder for children to learn to solve problems for themselves. Always be there to discuss solutions with them, and to offer suggestions, and praise them for their efforts to work things out.

Giving children the chance to do new tasks will help them feel competent and increase confidence. Make sure the tasks aren't too hard for them, and remember they're only children - don't expect perfection.

Make sure children have plenty of opportunities to run around and play - being physically active helps reduce stress. Ball games, skipping, bike riding, running, jumping, swimming are all good activities.

Don't forget to allow children time to "daydream" - having free time for unstructured play or to just sit and think is important for children's emotional growth.

Think about how much television children watch. Do you need to limit how much they watch and what they watch? Do they have enough time to play, think and chat to you without the distraction of TV, for instance?

Remember that being a supportive and loving parent who praises children for their efforts (not just their successes) in all areas of their lives will help them become confident adults.

If you're a parent having difficulty with your children, or you have concerns about their behaviour or wellbeing, there are