

### Help teenagers conquer stress and anxiety



Stress has become a way of life for most American teenagers. They're bombarded from every angle with pressures and expectations, leaving too little time for unwinding and resting. When *Group Magazine* asked 20,000 Christian teenagers about their top needs, the third most common response was "I need help managing or dealing with the stresses in my life." Pennsylvania youth minister Jana Snyder said of today's kids, "I sense an overwhelming burden to be successful and to be busy doing 100 different things every day."

In a recent Associated Press/MTV survey, 13- to 17-year-olds said school is their main worry. Stress, not relationships, is the hottest topic of conversation at school, says one teenager. Another adds, "I'm just really overwhelmed. I even compete with my parents about who's stressing more."

Child psychiatrist Thomas McCormack suggests several ways that parents can help ease teenagers' academic stress. First, discuss your expectations. Assure kids that you're proud of them when they try their best, no matter the outcome. Second, stay involved. Show interest in your teenagers' classes, extracurricular

activities, and schedules. Be available to help or talk when needed. Finally, watch for sudden declines in academic performance. These could indicate a learning disorder or emotional distress (such as depression and anxiety) that requires professional evaluation.

Read on to discover more insights about helping teenagers manage life's stress.

#### The United Methodist Perspective

"Staying busy" is a common response to the inquiry, "What have you been up to?" We wear busyness as a badge to signify our worth. We feel we must always be multi-tasking or rushing around to be important.

Adults with busy, overscheduled lives pass these behaviors and attitudes on to their children. Teenagers, in an effort to please their parents and live up to expectations, both real and perceived, may take on more responsibility than is healthy or even possible.

No matter how much teenagers may indicate otherwise, they really need and want their parents involved in their lives. The greatest gift you can give your kids is your time and attention. Quality time isn't something you can schedule together at 4 p.m. on a Tuesday. Instead, quality time has to arise naturally from quantity of time. Take intentional action now so quantity time doesn't lose out to busyness.

The next time someone asks what you've been up to, hopefully you can say, "Staying busy hanging out with my kids every chance I get."

—Hank Hilliard, Young People's Ministries, [hhilliard@GBOD.org](mailto:hhilliard@GBOD.org)



#### Here's a snapshot of teenagers' experiences with stress:

- Teenage girls are 55% more likely than teenage boys to say they pressure themselves to get good grades in school. And less than half of the pressured group of girls believes their parents realize how stressed-out they are. (ronicohensandler.com)
- Although one major study found that kids from middle-income households experience more stress than their peers, another found that affluent kids are the most stressed, for fear of "falling back." (AP/MTV; *New York Times*/CBS)
- An estimated 10% of teenagers suffer from an anxiety disorder. (teenhelp.com)
- Highly stressed teenagers are twice as likely as other teenagers to smoke, drink, get drunk, and use illegal drugs. (alcoholism.about.com)



## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

**Tackle the topic of stress by asking your kids these discussion starters:**

1. How stressed have you been lately? What things cause you the most anxiety, and why? Describe what your body and mind feel like when you're stressed out.
2. What are some ways you cope with stress? Which of these are productive, and which are destructive?
3. What amount of stress, if any, is necessary or helpful in life? Would you want to be stress-free? Why or why not?
4. Is it sinful to be stressed out? Why or why not? How we can give our anxieties over to God?



## Focus on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. God will help your teenagers cast all their anxieties and burdens on him because he cares for them (1 Peter 5:7).
2. Your teenagers will put their lives and worries into God's hands, knowing that he has a perfect plan and purpose for them.
3. Your teenagers will find healthy ways to deal with academic, social, and emotional stress.
4. Your family and home can be a haven for teenagers when they feel overwhelmed by school and life.

### Verse of the Month

**"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)**

Jesus offers respite from the many anxieties and cares of daily life. Because he was fully human, he knows what it's like to face challenges and expectations. By praying to Jesus and trusting him to help us, we can find peace for our worried hearts and minds.

## Going Deeper

**When Indiana youth worker Scott Greene realized he was getting out of touch with teenagers' lives, he decided to return to high school. Read his whole account at [SimplyYouthMinistry.com](http://SimplyYouthMinistry.com).**

Walking the halls of Warsaw High School as a 33-year-old sophomore for two weeks was pretty overwhelming at points. I faced fears and insecurities that I haven't felt since I was in high school myself (back when Michael Jackson and mullets were cool). However, I gained a newfound respect for kids and the pressures they face. Here are a few observations I made:

- Kids don't own their time. It doesn't belong to them. If I want to eat lunch at 11:30 instead of at noon, I eat early. I forgot what it was like to not make personal decisions about my time.
- Every day, kids spend a large portion of their hours trying to excel in areas that they aren't exceptionally good at and possibly don't enjoy. I know this is a necessary part of education, but I never thought about how frustrating that must be.
- Kids are getting pressure from everyone. One student told me he has 13 bosses: five teachers, one principal, two coaches, two employers, two parents, and a youth pastor. He said every one of these people has expectations for him, and none of those expectations is low. Kids may not have a mortgage or hungry mouths to feed, but their pressures are very real to them. We must keep that in mind, especially if they let us down or don't live up to the standards we set.
- Kids all want to excel, even if it means excelling at being bad. Adults run so fast and hard ourselves that we have to ration the attention we give teenagers. They're longing for our love, attention, and focused time. They're longing to be known—and known well. We must carve out serious time and emotional energy for kids and create environments and schedules that encourage biblical community.





# September 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
				FF- Mexican		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Care and concern mtg noon UMYF 6-8pm			Bible Study 6:30-7:30  Mission mtg. 7:30-8:30	FF-Breakfast	Rangers 7:05	Rangers 7:05
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
SALT noon Fund. mtg. Photo mtg. 4 Rangers 2:00 UMYF 6-8pm		Rangers 7:05	BS 6:30-7:30 Rangers 7:05	FF- Hamburgers		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Stockholders luncheon Noon UMYF-movie night *extended time			BS 6:30-7:30  *SYATP	FF-Italian		2-8:30 pm Unify
26	27	28	29	30		
UMYF 6-8pm special series!	Rangers 7:05	Rangers 7:05	BS 6:30-7:30 Rangers 1:05	FF-Mexican Rangers 7:05		

**Rangers:** We have signed the contract to work at the Ball park in Arlington. We will receive 10% of all sales to be used for the youth summer mission trips. We need all youth 16 and over and all parents of youth to help with this. Please look at the schedule and give Michelle a call to save your spot. I especially need to hear from those who might be able to work the day game on Sept. 29. But don't worry if you forget to call me. I'll be calling you!

**Stockholders luncheon:** Everyone who purchased stock and all parents of youth who attended this summer's mission trips are invited to come and have lunch and hear all about the trips. Each missionary should bring a dessert to share. Please RSVP for your family to the front office at the church. We would hate to run out of food! 817-483-1667.

**Unify:** A 1-day event in multiple locations throughout the CTC, designed for building leadership in our local churches. The event will begin with team-building activities and end with youth-led worship. You must sign up at youth by September 12 to attend. September 25, 2010-2:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Cost:\$5

**SYATP-** See You At The Pole is a national gathering of students on their school campuses for the purpose of praying for their schools, the faculty, their fellow students and for their community. The usual gathering time is one hour before school begins. This is a youth lead movement and I encourage all of our youth to attend, we don't gather to make a statement or loud speeches. It is to simply pray.

**Feeding Frenzy (FF)** is a lunch offered to all jrs.and srs. at Martin High school. We provide a all you can eat (or until we run out of food) lunch for a \$3 donation. Invite friends!

\*Extended youth time on Sunday, September 19 to 8:30pm. We are showing a very special movie, don't miss it!

