

4-H School-Age Child Care  
University of California Cooperative Extension

# PARENT STYLES

## Tips for Busy Parents

### STRESS IN CHILDREN

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*Eight year old Betty shows signs of stress. She can't seem to settle down and be quiet. Mornings she dashes into the kitchen, grabs a piece of toast and runs out to the bus. After school she is jumpy and irritable and cannot seem to concentrate. She eats poorly and is having more headaches lately. Mother is worried.*

How can stress be reduced?

- ★ Help your child understand what is causing this stress and try to change these causes.
- ★ Help your child learn how to cope with stress so that it does not hurt.



**What can parents do?**

- ★ Recognize when a child is stressed. Be alert to changes in behavior such as quarrels, bedwetting, poor concentration.

- ★ Talk to your child. Find a time when she is fairly calm. Tell her of your concerns and ask her to talk about what's bothering her. Tell her it's ok to feel scared, lonely or angry and that she is not alone in having these feelings.
- ★ Pay attention to stress in the family. Reduce it as much as possible. A child's stress may be a response to family pressures and tensions.
- ★ Help your child develop a healthy life style. A balanced and consistent pattern of eating, sleeping, exercising, and relaxing will provide security and reduce stress.
- ★ Help your child view his situation more positively. If a child can be helped to see that his parents divorce, for example, is acceptable and not uncommon; it can reduce 'the impact of the stress.

Children, even young ones, often experience overloads of stress. By your example and instruction, you can help your child learn ways to manage and reduce stress so it does not hurt them. At the same time, this will teach them stress-handling techniques that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

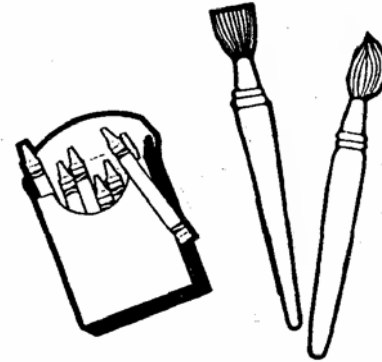
Resource: McCracken, J.B., Editor Reducing Stress in Young Children's Lives National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1986-87.

## Drawing and Puppet Contest

Many children cannot verbally express fears and anger about the stress in their life. Art tools and dramatic play allow a child to express upsets and act out private feelings.

### What You'll Need:

- Art Supplies (paint, crayons, pencils - whatever is available).
- Drawing Paper
- Puppets



### What to Do:

- ☆ Ask each family member to paint or draw a picture of a problem they have and how it might look if it were a person. For example, ask “If the ambulance that took Daddy to the hospital were a person, what would it look like?” Share drawings with each other to act out or explain why the problem was pictured that way.
- ☆ Use puppets to act out or explain why the problem was pictured that way.
- ☆ Puppets can be used to act out positive problem-solving approaches to normal daily stress a child might encounter. For instance, forgetting to bring homework or lunch money to school.