

## Kids and Stress

October 2011

# Parenting *Rules!*

### It's a Hectic Life...

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**Guess what? Children feel stress too!** Kids these days are often rushing around from the moment they get up until they fall into bed exhausted at the end of a long day. Doctor's appointments, soccer, music lessons, homework, Girl Scouts, school projects.... We often forget that our children may be feeling the stress of this demanding schedule.

#### How do you know if your child's behavior is stress related?



Here are some things to look for:

- Frequent aggressive or stubborn behavior
- Recurring headaches and/or stomach aches
- Excessive crying and/or whining
- Trouble sleeping and/or nightmares
- Changes in eating habits
- Unwillingness to participate in school or after school activities.

All kids can have bouts of bad moods and fussy eating; however, if your child's behavior consistently follows this pattern there may be a problem.

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### Over-scheduling....

After school activities are a wonderful way for kids to develop a sense of self and learn to socialize. However, too many of these activities can lead to “over-scheduling stress”. A good rule of thumb is that children should be in no more than three activities and should only go for one hour to each one each week.

Remember that kids also need unstructured playtime. Having a good amount of “free time” helps kids to become creative thinkers, discover their own interests, develop social skills and have time to relax.



Tips for avoiding over-scheduling your family:

- If you are feeling stress from your family's hectic schedule, **it means you need to change the schedule.**
- Leave lots of time in your schedule for “**family time**”. Be sure you have time to eat **dinner together, play games, talk and have fun.**
- **Your child needs alone time** to daydream and learn to entertain him/herself.
- **Limit the amount of activities** you sign your children up for.
- Remember that your child's **activities should be for fun** and enrichment. Do not put pressure on your children to overachieve or “be the best”.
- Make sure the activities your children participate in are **because they are interested in them** and not because you want them to.

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### School and Stress....

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Parents naturally want their children to do well in school. Our society has become so competitive that children are feeling the pressure to be the “best”. Encourage your children to perform to the best of their ability while letting them know that you love them and are proud of their efforts.

You can relieve your child’s stress and help him/her be a happy, successful learner.

Help your child be successful at school by:

- Praising your child for successes!
  - Emphasize that “doing their best” is what’s most important, not being perfect.
  - Providing a quiet place without distractions to do homework.
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- Identifying your child’s learning style and help him/her to develop a way to study that will be to his/her advantage.
  - Helping your child to set realistic goals for their age and abilities.
  - Being sure your kids get plenty of sleep and a nutritious breakfast.
  - Calmly talking to your child if he/she brings home a poor grade and figuring out what you can do together to make it better.
  - Keeping in contact with your child’s teachers so that you will be informed immediately of any difficulties your child may be having.
  - Being available to help your child study for tests or answer homework questions.
  - Teaching your children to be organized. Teaching them organizational skills, will help them to grow into organized adults.
  - Not over-scheduling your child’s after school time. Be sure to leave plenty of time for homework and relaxation.

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### Resources for Parents....

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#### **Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island**

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860

401-728-7920

[www.preventchildabuse-ri.org](http://www.preventchildabuse-ri.org)

#### **Rhode Island Parent Information Network**

175 Main Street Pawtucket, RI 02860

401-727-4144

[www.ripin.org](http://www.ripin.org)

#### **Rhode Island Department of Education**

255 Westminster Street Providence, RI 02903

401-222-4600

[www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

#### **Mental Health Association of Rhode Island**

500 Prospect Street Pawtucket, RI 02860

401-726-2285

[www.mhari.org](http://www.mhari.org)

[www.hyper-parenting.com](http://www.hyper-parenting.com)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.teacherandfamilies.com](http://www.teacherandfamilies.com)

### ABOUT PARENTING RULES! E-NEWS...

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Prevent Child Abuse  
Rhode Island



Rhode Island

Family & Children's Trust Fund

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Please share this information with the families in your programs. Thank you!