

## **CHILDREN AND STRESS**

*In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings...Ann Landers*

### **WHAT TO KNOW!**

- ❖ Stress is recognized as a perceived threat to an individual where the body reacts cognitively, physically, and emotionally; With children, it is often **change**
- ❖ Common sources of stress for children include family conflict, divorce, dual parenting, new schools, moving to new neighborhoods, peer pressure, bullying, and fighting
- ❖ Older children also worry about disappointing parents, school, family finances, peer acceptance or rejection, the future after high school, and their social life
- ❖ Today's children are often bombarded with demands from school, family, teams, and social relationships and often have never learned the tools to handle these demands
- ❖ Children now are also faced with learning rapidly changing technologies that make privacy difficult, provide information overload, and increase competitive pressure
- ❖ Children often have disorganization in their lives, face excessive expectations for accomplishment, and are hurried to participate in different activities
- ❖ Children today are exposed to frequent violent behaviors from television, video games, and movies; news reports often present distorted, misleading and confusing information
- ❖ Stressors in addition can interact and have a cumulative effect on the child
- ❖ Stress is experienced by children in many ways including mood swings, acting out behaviors, eating problems, sleeping problems, grinding teeth, headaches, crying, and regressing to immature behavior such as thumb sucking, bedwetting, and clinging
- ❖ Stress in children can lead to health problems such as asthma, headaches, eating disorders, gastrointestinal illnesses, drinking, and using illicit and prescription drugs
- ❖ How children handle stress depends on their personality, environment and coping skills
- ❖ Some children handle stress by taking it in stride and adjusting to the change
- ❖ Other children get upset easily and may withdraw from the stressful event
- ❖ Still others may become aggressive and act out, becoming defiant and oppositional
- ❖ Children may also become stressed by incorporating their parents' or friends' worries and problems
- ❖ Research has shown that children who handle stress well have a loving relationship with at least one adult, believe in their own effectiveness, are able to assist their family, believe that they are worthwhile, have effective problem solving strategies, and believe that they can make things better for themselves

### **WHAT TO DO!**

- ❖ Establish a safe environment and encourage your child to discuss what bothers them
- ❖ Encourage exercise and physical activity as well as relaxation, meditation, or yoga
- ❖ Promote healthy eating and good sleep hygiene
- ❖ Do not hurry your child or enroll them in too many activities
- ❖ Monitor what they watch on television, on the computer, and on their cell phone
- ❖ Don't rescue or shield your child from stress; rather teach problem resolution strategies and reinforce behaviors that improve confidence
- ❖ Be a good role model and demonstrate how you handle stress successfully
- ❖ Seek professional help to assist you/your child in reducing anxiety and in learning effective coping strategies

## **WE CAN HELP!**

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at **DrKimmel@aol.com**.

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