



Our children,  
our hope,  
our future

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month! Wear GREEN on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> to show your support!

At OPS, we are celebrating Mental Health Awareness Month by providing families with information and exercises designed to foster conversations about mental health between parents/guardians and children. The information and exercises will be focused on identifying stressors, identifying stress symptoms, ways to manage stress, and developing coping skills.

This first packet is about **STRESS**:  
What is it?  
and  
How do *you* know when you have it?



### What is Stress?

“Stress” refers to the way we feel (physically, mentally, emotionally) when adjusting/reacting/responding to any change(s). These changes can be good (a new baby, moving to a new house, starting a new school year, ending the school year, getting together with friends or relatives you don’t see often) or bad (an upcoming test, parents divorcing, moving to a new house, starting a new school year, the death of a loved one). You may notice that some of the examples listed for good and bad were the same. This is because the way we think about the changes in our life has a big impact on what kind of stress we view it to be.

-----**FAMILY FORUM TIME!**-----  
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### Worksheet 1: Stress Triggers: What causes you stress?

For the first worksheet (attached), you and your family will spend some time talking about what gets each of you stressed. Take a look at the examples, then discuss with your family what situations are stressful for each of you. Once the chart is complete, use the questions for discussion to facilitate more conversation about stress in your family.

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### Stress Symptoms

Stress itself is not a feeling, although we often hear people say, “I feel stressed.” Different people experience stress differently. For example, some people feel tired, can’t sleep, and don’t want to do anything fun when they’re stressed. Others feel nervous, can’t stop thinking about things, and can’t sit still when they’re stressed. That’s because each person responds to stress differently. In fact, you may have noticed you sometimes feel like the first example above and sometimes feel like the second example. This is because different stress triggers can affect us differently, causing different symptoms.

-----**FAMILY FORUM TIME!**-----  
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Worksheet 2: Signs I might be stressed

For the second worksheet, you and your family will spend some time talking about how you each feel when you get stressed. Take a look at the examples, then discuss with your family how stress makes you think, feel, act, etc. Once the chart is complete, use the questions for discussion to facilitate more conversation about how stress affects you and your family. A checklist of common signs and symptoms has been included to help you.

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**Next Steps**

Next week's packet will address ways to manage stress. However, after doing these two worksheets, you may have already noticed things you and your family can do to decrease stress triggers and/or symptoms. It's never too early to make positive changes; just remember to have patience with each other during the transition. Any change is a stressful change!

**To Learn More**

If you'd like to learn more about stress, the different types of stress or how it affects our bodies and our minds, please visit the following online resources:

- [ClevelandClinic.org: Stress](https://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/condition/stress)
- [MentalHelp.net: Types of Stress and Their Symptoms](https://www.mentalhelp.net/types-of-stress-and-their-symptoms/)
- [KidsHealth.org: Stress](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress)
- [MQMentalHealth.org: Stress and Our Mental Health: What is the Impact and How Can We Tackle It?](https://www.mqmentalhealth.org/stress-and-our-mental-health-what-is-the-impact-and-how-can-we-tackle-it/)

**Worksheet 1: What causes me stress**

Instructions: Each member of the family completes his/her row, listing the things that cause him/her stress. You can work together, helping each other to recognize situations, or work independently. Then, as a family, answer the "Questions for discussion" listed on the next page.

	<b>At Home</b>	<b>At School</b>	<b>At Work</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Example:</b>	Getting out the door on time, planning meals, cleaning up after others, when family members are stressed	Tests, when projects are due at the same time, not getting along with friends, not getting along with teachers	Reports, deadlines, not getting along with coworkers, not getting along with bosses, commuting/getting in on time	Sports games, competitions, not getting outside to play, chores, leaving home for vacation
<b>Mom</b>				
<b>Dad</b>				
<b>Me</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				

## Worksheet 1: What causes me stress

Questions for discussion:

1. Were there any stress triggers listed for all the people in your family? Were there any that only triggered stress for one person?

2. Do you notice any patterns between you and other family members?

3. Did you learn anything new about yourself or another family member? Did you know that many of the same things that stress you about school cause stress for Mom and Dad at work?

## Worksheet 2: Signs I might be stressed

Instructions: Each member of the family completes his/her row, listing the ways s/he experiences stress. You can work together, helping each other to recognize symptoms, or work independently. Then, as a family, answer the "Questions for discussion" listed on the next page.

	<b>Physically</b>	<b>Mentally</b>	<b>Emotionally</b>	<b>Behaviorally</b>
<b>Example:</b>	Neck/back pain, trouble sleeping, headaches, stomach aches, tired, indigestion	Overly self-critical, Worrying, jealous, just want to be with mom/dad, lose track of time	Irritable/angry, Loss of motivation, Anxiety/nervous, Depression/sadness, lonely, guilty, ashamed	Spending more time alone, yelling over little things, snippy, procrastinating, attention seeking
<b>Mom</b>				
<b>Dad</b>				
<b>Me</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				
<b>Brother/sister</b>				

## Worksheet 2: Signs I might be stressed

Questions for discussion:

1. In what ways do you experience stress the same as other family members? In what ways do you experience stress differently?

2. Do you notice any patterns between you and other family members in the way stress affects you?

3. Did you learn anything new about yourself or another family member? Did you know that when Mom/Dad is yelling, it's because of stress?

## Worksheet 2: Signs I might be stressed

Use this checklist to help you identify some of the ways you respond to stress.

- Racing heartbeat
- Heart palpitations
- Sweating
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Stomachache
- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Urinating more
- Dry mouth
- Cold hands, feet, and/or skin
- Tense muscles
- Sleep problems
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Inability to focus
- Lack of motivation
- Depression
- Chest pain
- Social withdrawal
- Mind racing
- Focusing on negative thoughts
- High blood pressure
- Weight loss or gain
- Skin problems such as rashes and breakouts
- Hair loss
- Nervous behaviors
- Appetite change
- Nervousness
- Forgetful
- Indecisive
- Lack of energy
- Back pain
- Neck pain
- Heartburn
- Nausea or vomiting
- Belching or flatulence
- Panic attacks
- Grinding teeth
- Light headedness
- Frequent colds
- Increase in allergy attacks
- Mood swings
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Suicidal thoughts
- Frequent crying
- Emotionally reactive
- Obsessive or compulsive behavior
- Reduced productivity
- Rapid or mumbled speech
- Fatigue
- Impulsivity