



## Stressed-Out Teens: A Cause for Concern and Action

American teens report stress at levels far higher than what they believe is healthy, that school is their biggest stressor and that stress is having an impact on their performance at home, work and school, according to according to [Stress in America™](#), a survey by the American Psychological Association.

"Many American teens report experiencing stress at unhealthy levels, appear uncertain in their stress management techniques and experience symptoms of stress in numbers that mirror adults' experiences," according to the survey of 1,018 teenagers, ages 13 to 17, and 1,950 adults.

**What are they stressed about?** Teens' self-reported stress levels were higher than that reported by adults. Here are some findings from the survey:

- 83% reported that school is a somewhat or significant source of stress.
- 59% reported that managing their time to balance all activities is a significant stressor.
- 40% neglected their responsibilities at home due to stress and 21 percent say the same about work and school responsibilities.
- 40% reported feeling irritable or angry during the previous month, and 36% reported feeling nervous or anxious.
- 33% reported "having lain awake at night" due to stress.

- 32% reported experiencing headaches, 21%, upset stomach or indigestion, and 23% had skipped a meal because of stress.

### **Stress Management: Not So Good.**

When teens look to manage their stress, only a small number engage in physical activities, a proven stress reducer, APA reports. Instead, many teens turn to sedentary activities to cope, such as playing video games, surfing the Web and watching TV or movies. "But those teens who do engage in more physically active stress management behaviors report lower stress levels and better health behaviors overall, especially when it comes to sleep, exercise and weight."

One particular danger for stressed-out teens is drug use. A study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America showed that 73 percent of teens report the number-one reason for using drugs is to deal with the pressures and stress of school. "Surprisingly, only 7 percent of parents believe that teens might use drugs to cope with stress, showing parents severely underestimate the impact of stress on their teens' decision to use drugs, the study reported."

**Recommendations from the APA.** "In order to break this unhealthy legacy of stress in America, we need to focus on stress and mental health at a younger age," the APA reported. "We need to give them the skills to take control over their lives in healthy ways and allow them to grow into healthy adults."

## 4 Stress Buster Tips for Teens



By American Psychological Association

**Move your body.** Physical activity is one of the most effective stress busters. It's even better when you do it with friends. You're more likely to have fun — and keep at it.

**Enjoy yourself.** Besides physical activities, find other hobbies or activities that bring you joy, like listening to music, going to the movies or drawing. Make a point to keep doing these things even when you're stressed and busy.

**Strike a balance.** School is important, but it's not everything. When you plan your week, schedule time to get schoolwork done, but also schedule time to have fun.

**Let yourself shine.** Spend some time really thinking about the things you're good at, and find ways to do more of those things.

