

## PEDAGOGICAL INPUT

# *for the adventure of family life*



## 25\_What are the effects of stress on children?

Stress has become a buzzword today and is on everyone's lips. "Are you stressed?" is a common question. It's almost as common as the statement "I don't have time." People who cannot say they are under stress are almost viewed with suspicion. Maybe that person is lazy? Of course, people who are stressed also have the feeling they are important. Because we define ourselves almost exclusively by our performance. Who am I if I approach my life with serenity, enjoy my life and take time for leisure and doing nothing?

### **What is perceived as stress varies from person to person.**

Stress is created by events we experience as unpleasant, threatening or overwhelming. Stress always arises when a person cannot find suitable coping methods for a difficult situation. The situation is perceived as a burden.

The inner attitude plays a major role here. Perfectionists experience stress more often than relaxed people.

Also, if I set my standards very high and have high expectations of myself, I get stressed more quickly than if I align my performance expectations with my ability.

### **Stress in children and adolescents**

Stress can manifest itself physically and mentally: Affected children and young people complain, for example, of stomach pains, sweating or headaches; they are irritable, exhausted or afraid. As short-term reactions to current events, such as a difficult test at school, this is completely normal. It only becomes a problem if the symptoms persist.

Some children and young people become aggressive and react destructively. They attract attention because they are always disruptive. Others withdraw into themselves. They say little and seem listless. Both reactions can have the long-term effect of impairing social relationships.

There are of course a multitude of stressors that can burden children and young people in everyday life, for example conflicts with parents, teachers or peers, financial problems, difficulties with growing up, pressure at school and much more. Children often sense when their parents have problems and react to this with symptoms.

**Interaction: Stress causes anxiety and anxiety causes stress.**

Studies from brain research confirm: If you are afraid and feel stupid, you cannot learn anything. The example set by adults who are in important relationships with children and young people makes a big difference in their perception of stress. If adults show composure and don't panic right away if something doesn't work out, this is also transferred to children and young people.

**The message "Making mistakes is allowed" relaxes children.**

Of course, it relaxes children and young people when parents and teachers show them that they are valuable and okay, regardless of their achievements. It also boosts the children's self-esteem.

When adults notice that children or young people are behaving strangely, the best thing to do is have a conversation with them, where the adult is seriously interested in the inner life of the child or young person. Because genuine interest in one's own experience also has a stress-reducing effect.

"The most important task parents have today is to protect their children from the pressure that society puts on them," brain researcher Prof. Gerald Hüther is convinced.

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