

CONNECTIONS

FOR TEENS



Stress in Grief

Stress is a normal feeling you get as a result of many different kinds of changes and challenges. Any situation that causes you to adapt and adjust causes stress. Remember when you started at a new school, or started middle or high school? Stress!! So, just imagine how much stress adjusting to the death of your loved one can cause.

It seems like life should just stop for a while when you are coping with the death of a loved one. The world as you knew it has ended. But, life goes on. There are still friend demands, parent demands, financial demands, school demands and more. All these things you may have handled just fine before your loved one died. And then . . . stress overload!

Most teens (and adults for that matter) don't like the feeling of being "stressed out." There are two ways to go about trying to fix the

feeling: short-term coping and long-term stress management.

Short-term coping tries to "fix the feeling" without dealing with the underlying causes. Short-term strategies may include things like compulsive TV watching, eating, reading, listening to music, going out with friends, talking on the phone and playing video games. Short-term coping strategies work, but they only work for a short time. If you only use short-term coping to handle stress overload, before long these coping strategies will become a problem.

To handle stress in the long-term, it takes managing your stress, not just coping with it. As you begin to manage your stress you will feel more in control. Feeling more in control will help you feel less anxious and better about yourself. Feeling better about you helps you move through your grief and re-engage in life.

Stress overload looks like . . .

- Changes in sleep (too much or too little)
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Constant feelings of anxiety and worry
- Feeling depressed or sad most of the time
- Addiction to the internet, your phone or video games

- Getting angry or tearful easily and out of proportion to the situation
- You are drinking alcohol or abusing drugs

You can manage your stress! Check out the coping corner to get some tips on managing your stress. Give it a try!



Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency.

-Natalie Goldberg

Relaxation Exercise

Learning to relax is not as easy as it sounds. We have so much going on in our lives that few of us have a free moment to spare, but if you are really stressed, you need some time to relax. Here are some ideas to help you relax:

1. Have someone read to you. Ask a friend or family member to help you. You will need to find a good book (maybe even a childhood favorite) and a quiet place. Dim the lights and sit, quietly and comfortably. Close your eyes.

Have your friend or family member read this book to you.

2. Listen to music. For this exercise you will need to find a quiet place to sit and relax that has access to music. Find some music that your loved one liked to listen to or find music that you like to listen to. Sit quietly, close your eyes, and listen. Focus on the music, and try to keep from thinking about anything other than the music.

Coping Corner: Successful Stress Management

-- 1 --

Stop using negative coping behaviors (drugs, alcohol, compulsive eating, TV watching, etc.)

-- 2 --

Find someone you trust to talk with

-- 3 --

Be good to yourself. Get enough sleep, eat well, exercise, and cut out excess sugar, caffeine, and junk food.

-- 4 --

Use positive self-talk. For example, "This is hard but I am learning to handle it," "I am grieving, so I am going to feel a little stressed for a while."

-- 5 --

Learn relaxation techniques and use them.

-- 6 --

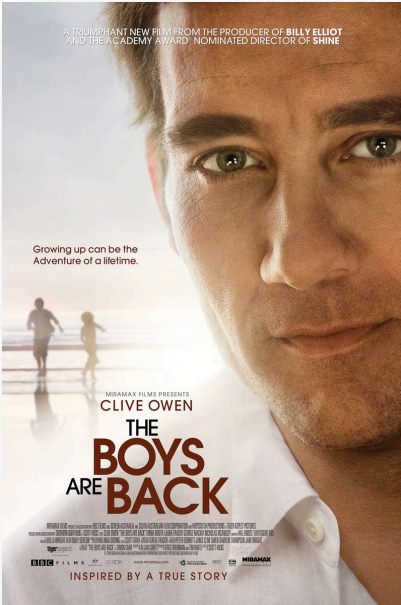
Express yourself through art, dance, music, auto mechanics - anything that engages your mind and your body.

-- 7 --

Learn to use coping statements—what we say to ourselves when we are in a difficult situation. Here are a few suggestions: "One step at a time; I can handle this situation." "I've gotten through this kind of thing before—it will be over shortly." "Keep focusing on the present: what is it I have to do?"

You can make a coping card with statements such as these and hang them around your mirror or keep them on a small card in your wallet to refer to when you feel stress and anxiety.

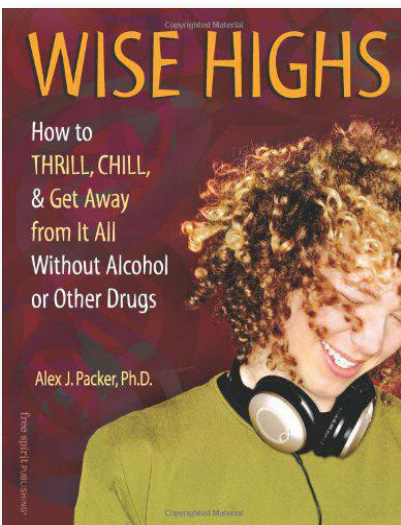
This Month's Helpful Book & Movie



Movie:

The Boys Are Back

This movie is a true story of a man who must suddenly raise his two sons alone after the untimely passing of his second wife. Joe, who is dealing with his own loss, is confronted with challenges while coping with his young son Artie's expressions of grief. They soon are joined by Harry, Joe's teenage son from his first marriage, who brings his own personal baggage into the mix. Without a roadmap for how to move forward, the three boys decide its best to leave the conventional rules and responsibilities of the grown-up world behind and lead a life based on the mantra 'just say yes.'



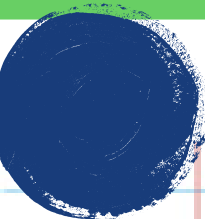
Book:

Wise Highs

By Alex J. Packer, Ph.D.

This is an entertaining book with loads of ideas on ways to cope with stress in creative, playful, legal, and healthy ways.

JOURNAL PROMPT



I feel very overwhelmed when . . .

The best relaxation techniques for me are . . .

A large grid of light blue lines on a white background, intended for writing the journal prompt responses.