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## **Navigating Teen Stress and Anxiety: When to Seek Help**

The teenage years are full of new experiences, challenges, and opportunities. During this time of life, teenagers' brains are changing at a rapid pace. This often leads to strong emotions and mood swings. In addition, teens have no shortage of things to stress about between schoolwork, extracurricular activities, social media, fitting in, and maintaining relationships.

Feeling anxious and stressed are normal emotions that anyone can experience, just like feeling happy or sad. It's also good to keep in mind that feelings of anxiety or stress can be a positive thing. Feeling anxious can help keep teens safe by causing them to think twice before making dangerous decisions. It can also motivate them to work hard to be prepared for extracurricular activities or assignments.

Normal feelings of anxiety and stress usually go away quickly, generally within a day or a few hours. It is time to seek professional help when the anxious feelings become very intense and go on for weeks or even months. Anxiety should not prevent your teen from learning, enjoying their daily life, or engaging at home, school, or work.

Here are some things caregivers can do to provide support for teens:

- Be available to listen to your teen every day without distractions.
- Acknowledge your teen's fears and emotions without being judgmental.
- Encourage teens to maintain a healthy diet, engage in physical activity, and get plenty of sleep.
- If you believe your teen needs additional support, reach out to your child's physician, the school counselor, or your local mental health center.

To learn more about teen stress and anxiety check out the most recent K-State Research and Extension Living Well webinar recording, titled: "Teen Stress and Anxiety: How Worried Do Parents Need to Be" at [bit.ly/livingwellteenstress](https://bit.ly/livingwellteenstress).

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