

Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services

HELPING KIDS COPE WITH STRESS

AGE SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Infant to 2½ Years

- Maintain calm atmosphere
- Keep familiar routines
- Avoid unnecessary separations
- Minimize exposure to reminders of stress
- Expect temporary behavior regression
- Help give simple names to big feelings
- Talk briefly and openly about stressful event
- Provide soothing activities

2½ to 5 Years

- Maintain familiar routines
- Do not introduce new and challenging experiences
- Avoid nonessential separations
- Tolerate retelling of stressful events
- Help name strong feelings during brief conversations
- Respect fears
- Expect regressive behavior
- Protect from re-exposure to stressful events
- Provide opportunities and props for play
- If nightmares, explain they are not real to help subside

6 to 11 Years

- Listen and tolerate re-telling of events
- Respect fears
- Give time to cope
- Increase awareness and monitor play
- Set and enforce limits
- Permit to try new ideas to deal with fears and feel safe
- Reassure that all feelings are normal after stressful events

12 to 18 Years

- Encourage discussions with peers and trusted adults
- Reassure that strong feelings (guilt, shame, embarrassment, desire for revenge) are normal
- Provide healthy outlets for emotions
- Encourage spending time with supportive friends/peers
- Help find activities that offer opportunities to experience mastery, control, and self-esteem.



CONTINUED ON BACK 

CYSS Mission: To support readiness and quality of life by reducing the conflict between military mission requirements and parental responsibilities



This information has been provided by Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services.
For more information on resources and programs, please visit:
WWW.ARFP.ORG/CYSS

Fort Family Outreach & Support Center assistance is available 24/7
at 866-345-8248 and/or WWW.ARFP.ORG



TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educators are often faced with the challenge of supporting kids who are coping with stressful life circumstances. The guidance provided by an educator can make the difference in whether or not kids feel completely overwhelmed by their stressors or are able to develop healthy emotional behavioral and psychological coping skills. The following are helpful strategies to assist educators in supporting kids coping with stress:

◆ **Be a role model**

Set an example and keep in mind that kids learn from watching the adults in their lives.

◆ **Connect with kids**

Pay attention to their fears; respect their wish to not talk until ready; help them keep stressors in perspective.

◆ **Foster open communication**

Speak in terms that are easy to understand; reassure and provide opportunities for them to express their thoughts and concerns in safe ways; answer questions as openly and honestly as possible.

◆ **Maintain consistency**

Expect and respond to changes in behavior; maintain consistent academic and behavioral expectations.

◆ **Foster resilience**

Help kids interpret what has happened and make sense of it; help them explore positive ways of coping with fears and anxieties.

◆ **Be alert to special needs**

Spend extra time with kids if necessary; make referral to school or community counseling for additional support if needed.

◆ **Open lines of communication with parents and caregivers**

Coordinate information between school and home; provide parents with helpful suggestions and information about available school and community resources.



Information adapted from *Helping Children Cope with Stress* (1984) by Avis Brenner; *Operation: Military Kids Ready, Set, Go! Training Manual* (2010) by 4-H Army Youth Development Project; and Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration National Mental Health Center.



This information has been provided by Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services.

For more information on resources and programs, please visit:

WWW.ARF.P.ORG/CYSS

Fort Family Outreach & Support Center assistance is available 24/7
at 866-345-8248 and/or WWW.ARF.P.ORG

