

## Coping

Children who learn to cope effectively with stress are better prepared to overcome life's challenges. The best protection against unsafe, worrisome behaviors may be a wide repertoire of positive, adaptive coping strategies.

***Before we begin teaching children this repertoire of coping and stress-reduction skills, some basic questions to ask ourselves:***

- Do I help him understand the difference between a real crisis and something that just feels like an emergency?
- Do I model positive coping strategies on a consistent basis?
- Do I allow my child enough time to use imaginative play? Do I recognize that fantasy and play are childhood's tools to solve problems?
- Do I guide my child to develop positive, effective coping strategies?
- Do I believe that telling him to "just stop" the negative behaviors will do any good?
- Do I recognize that for many young people, risk behaviors are attempts to alleviate their stress and pain?
- If my child participates in negative behaviors, do I condemn him for it? Do I recognize that I may only increase his sense of shame and therefore drive him toward more negativity?
- Do I model problem-solving step by step or do I just react emotionally when I'm overwhelmed?
- Do I model the response that sometimes the best thing to do is conserve energy and let go of the belief that I can tackle all problems?
- Do I model the importance of caring for our bodies through exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep? Do I model relaxation techniques?
- Do I encourage creative expression?
- As I struggle to compose myself so I can make fair, wise decisions under pressure, do I model how I take control rather than respond impulsively or rashly to stressful situations?
- Do I create a family environment in which talking, listening, and sharing is safe, comfortable, and productive?

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