

Helping your child manage school stress

Fall is a busy time of year. Kids have been back at school for a few weeks, after school activities are underway, and maybe you're already starting to make plans for the holiday season. You're feeling stressed – have you considered that your kids may be feeling the crunch too?

Stress can affect everyone, even children. Learning how to handle the demands of school, extracurriculars and friendships can sometimes be hard. When the pressures build up, children can feel overloaded and anxious. Helping your children learn how to manage stress will help keep them mentally and physically healthy.

One of the challenges parents face is understanding the difference between "normal worry" and signs of stress. Stress can affect social relationships, schoolwork, and a child's happiness and emotional well-being. Children who feel stressed exhibit many of the same signs that adults do, such as headaches, having trouble sleeping or irritability.

There are a number of things you can do to help your child manage stress:

- **Look at the sources of stress in your child's life and adjust the things that you can change.** For example, maybe your child has trouble with transitions or with pressure. Maybe she shows signs of stress at the beginning of the school year, or just before big tests. Do what you can to be more available during these times.
- **Acknowledge your child's worries and fears.** Sometimes things that seem small and unimportant to adults can seem very big and worrying to children. Be sure to let your child know that you take his or her concerns seriously.
- **Model good ways of handling stress.** Talk about how you handle stressful situations. Show your child the positive ways you relax and relieve stress -- whether it's through physical activity, listening to music, taking a hot bath or shower, or reading for pleasure.
- **Slow down.** Many adults lead rushed and hurried lives, and all this hurry can have a spill-over effect on children. How many times do you hear yourself say, "Hurry! We're late!" Children can begin to feel as frazzled as adults do. Make a conscious effort to try to slow down when you are with your child.

RBC supports a wide-range of programs that help children and youth stay happy and healthy, inside and out. The RBC Children's Mental Health Project funds organizations across Canada that provide trusted resources and programs for

parents. Visit www.rbc.com/childrensmentalhealth for more information. These tips were drafted with the assistance of Ceridian Canada, RBC's employee assistance provider.