

Strong Minds make for Strong Kids

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Mental Health Promotion Strategies for Infants, Children and Teens

For Babies & Toddlers:

1.

Sing Together

Hold your baby, sing, and make eye contact to foster a loving bond.

2.

Respond with Care

Comfort your baby when they cry. It builds trust and safety.

3.

Play Together

Let your toddler explore everyday objects and follow their lead in play.

4.

Stay Calm

Practice deep breathing to stay calm when your baby is upset.

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For Young Children:

5.

Feeling Charades

Act out emotions and guess them to build emotional awareness.

6.

Draw a Happy Place

Encourage kids to draw their “happy place” and refer to it when stressed.

7.

Mindful Eating

Have kids eat a favorite snack slowly, focusing on taste and texture.

8.

Dance Out Emotions

Let kids create dances to express how different emotions feel.

9.

Mirror Emotions

Make faces that show emotions and guess what they represent.

10.

Emotion Thermometer

Help kids rate their emotions from 1 to 5 using a visual thermometer.

11.

What If Game

Ask “What if” questions and brainstorm creative solutions to problems.

12.

Stress Stoplight

Talk about stress like a stoplight from bad (red), okay (yellow), to good (green).

13.

Stretch & Reach

Pretend to push clouds back into the sky as a stretching exercise.

14.

Belly Breathing

Teach deep breathing to calm down when feeling stressed or angry.

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For School-Age Children:

15.

Name Emotions

Teach words for different emotions to help them communicate feelings.

16.

Gratitude Collage

Create a collage of things they're grateful for.

17.

Finger Breathing

Trace fingers while taking deep breaths to calm down.

18.

Animal Pack

Imagine how animals deal with stress and how a "pack" can help.

19.

Focus Eyes

Encourage them to focus their eyes on one spot to calm racing thoughts.

20.

Excitement Over Worry

Shift nervousness into excitement by reframing the feeling.

21.

Inner Buddy vs. Bully

Name their positive (buddy) and negative (bully) inner voices.

22.

Invisible String

Write names of supportive people on notes to show their invisible support network.

23.

Daily Reflection

Have them journal or draw about their day and how it made them feel.

24.

Calm Jar

Create a jar of calming activity ideas to use when stressed.

25.

Mindful Walks

Go for a walk and focus on what they see, hear, and smell to be present.

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For Preteens:

26.

Active Play

Encourage daily physical activity like skipping, running, or jumping.

27.

Recognize Stress

Talk about how stress feels in their body.

28.

Muscle Relaxation

Practice tensing and relaxing muscles to release stress.

29.

Express Emotions

Draw how they think their face looks when feeling different emotions.

30.

Quick Calming

Brainstorm 9-second calming activities, like petting an animal or counting.

31.

Stress Plan

Write down stressors and brainstorm ways to cope.

32.

Worry Box

Create a box for storing written worries until they're ready to discuss them.

33.

Count to 10

When emotions run high, encourage them to count to 10 before reacting.

34.

Happy Place

Close eyes, breathe deeply, and imagine a calm, happy place.

35.

Creative Outlets

Express feelings through art, music, or dancing.

36.

Growth Mindset

Think about how they can improve, even in areas where they're skilled.

37.

Three Good Things

Before bed, write down three positive things from their day.

38.

Best/Worst Outcomes:

Think about the best and worst possible outcomes of a situation.

39.

Practice Apologizing

Reflect on times they've apologized and how it improved relationships.

40.

Stress Scale

Ask them to rate their stress level from 1 (most stressed) to 10 (least stressed).

41.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Name 5 things they see, 4 things they feel, 3 sounds, 2 smells, and 1 taste.

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For Teens:

42.

Positive Affirmations

Write down 10 positive affirmations and refer to them when stressed.

43.

Stress Reflection

Regularly reflect on signs of stress and how to manage them.

44.

Focus on Values

Use their values to guide decisions and behaviors when overwhelmed.

45.

Create a Stress Kit

Make a kit with items that help relieve stress.

46.

Laughter

Watch something funny or spend time with people who make them laugh.

47.

Healthy Habits

Encourage sleep, nutritious food, and regular physical activity.

48.

Journaling

Write down thoughts and feelings to identify patterns.

49.

Relaxing Music

Create a playlist of calming music or sounds.

50.

Get Organized

Use to-do lists and calendars to stay on top of tasks and reduce stress.