

Stress

Did you know that I can feel stress? Young children can feel more stress than anybody! Usually people talk about stress when they are talking about older kids or grownups. It is hard for grownups to think that little children might feel stress too, but we do. We don't understand the world as well as you do and have very little control over what happens to us. That can be very stressful! I really need your help with this one!

- **Help me understand my routine each day.** I like to know what is going to happen next. I like to hear it everyday, even if we did the same thing yesterday. You might hear me ask the same questions over and over again. Try not to get frustrated with me, this is my way of trying to understand or asking you to give me more information.
- **Let me know if there is going to be a change in my routine.** I feel worried inside when I don't know what is going to happen or if I don't know what I need to do. It really helps when you tell me about my day when I wake up in the morning and if you keep me updated as the day moves forward. It really helps me do what I need to do, when you can give me a five minute warning before a change happens. Even if I complain and don't like what is going to happen, I can still get ready and do well with your help, if **you** stay calm. If I don't do well, it is not your fault, I will know that you tried. Sometimes changes are just hard for little children.
- **Talk to me if I get upset about a change.** Ask me why I am upset. Sometimes I just don't like to stop what I am doing or sometimes I might be worried about what will happen next. I need your help putting my feelings into words. There may be something I don't understand. It will be easier for me to calm down if you stay calm while you help me.
- **Practice new things with me before I have to do them with others.** If I am going to do something new, it helps me get ready and feel good about trying if I can practice with you first. Even if our practice is not exactly the same as what is going to happen, just pretending about something new or just reading a book about it, can help. When the new thing happens, I'll remember about practicing with you and know just what to do.



- **Help me know what to do when I miss you.** Being away from you is hard for me, even when I am doing something fun or am with someone I like. Sometimes it helps if you tell me what we will do together when you come back. I might feel better if I have a special toy or blanket with me or if I get to keep something of yours while you are away. It might help if you tell me what you do when you miss me. You are my most important person and I feel best when you are near me.
- **Protect me. Be careful what I see and hear.** Grownup things can scare me. I'm not sure yet what is real and what is pretend. Even shows and movies made for kids can scare me. Hearing about grownup problems can scare me too because I don't understand grownup things. I really get scared when grownups get upset around me, even if it is because of grownup problems. Protect me and if I see something that upsets me, reassure me that I am safe and take me away from it if you can.
- **Listen to me.** I get excited about what I am learning and want to tell you about it. I trust you the most and save some of my most important news for you. I also save some of my most important questions and worries for you too. This helps me feel safe. Help me know that I can ask you anything and talk to you about anything and you will try to understand, even if what I am saying is making you upset too. I need you to help me make sense of the world because I am too little to do it for myself.
- **Some stress is "good" stress and some stress is "bad" stress.** Not all stress is bad. Learning to do new things can be stressful for me but you can help me take a break if I need to or you can help me feel good about trying. "Bad" stress makes me feel scared or worried inside. "Bad" stress makes it hard for me to go to school ready to learn because my feelings will be in the way.

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