

Empowering Your Teenager to Cope with Stress

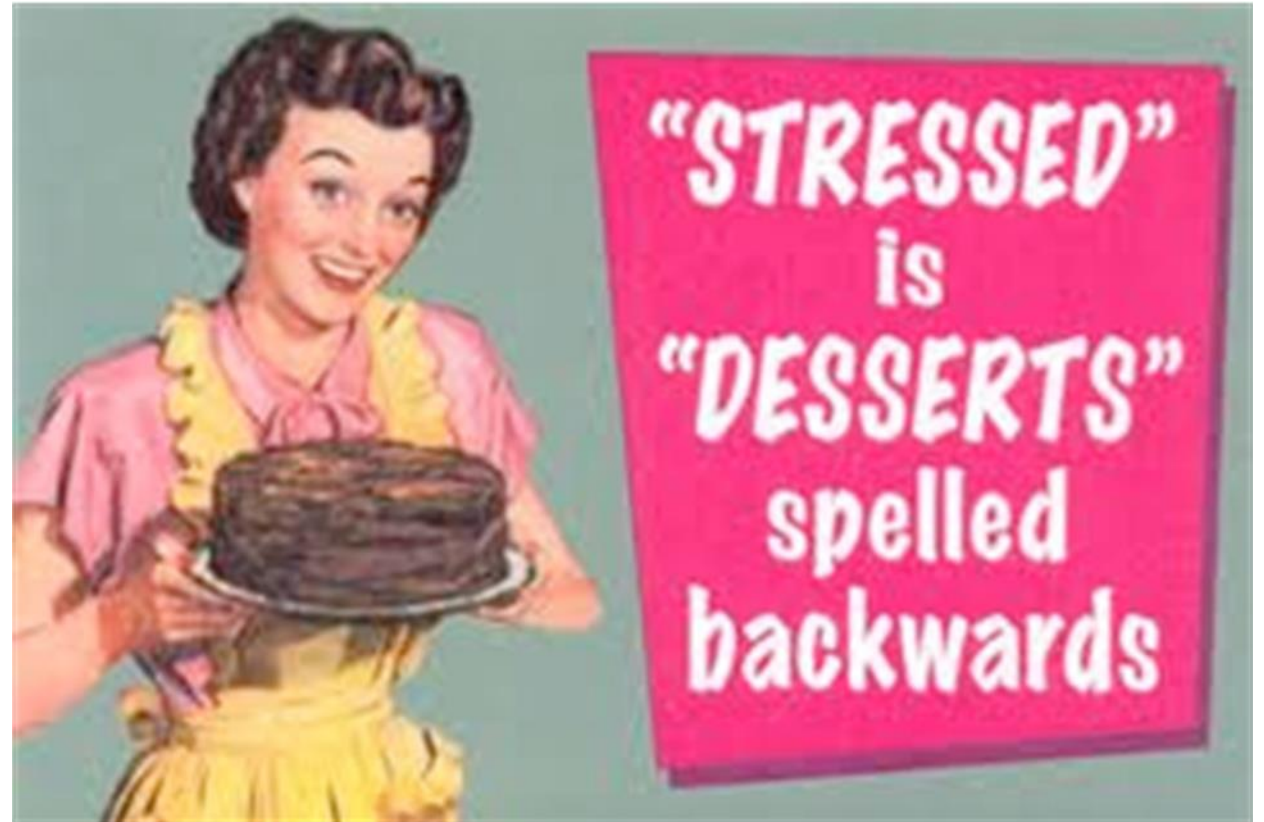
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Outline

- What is stress
- Causes of stress
- Warning signs of stress
- Coping strategies
- How parents can help



What is Stress?

- A reaction that happens when real or outward demands made on us go beyond our ability to cope



What causes teenagers stress?

- Homework and study, especially exams
- Expectations and pressure to do well at school
- Social relationships
- Life challenges, such as finishing school
- Lack of time - feeling unprepared or overwhelmed
- Lack of sleep
- Family changes



Stress System

- Not all stress is bad
- The stress system is the body's attempt to help us cope with a stressor
- Chronic stress is often not recognised
- How you view stress is important



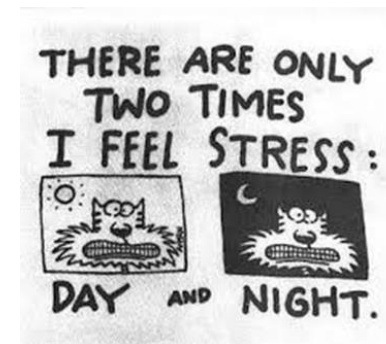
Imagine...

- The best way to envision the effect of acute stress is to imagine yourself in a primitive situation, such as being chased by a bear



Stress Responses

- **Foot on the gas** - an angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, overly emotional and unable to sit still. Sometimes known as the fight response.
- **Foot on the brake** - a withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out and show very little energy or emotion. Sometimes know as the flight response.
- **Foot on both** - A tense and frozen stress response. You 'freeze' under pressure and can't do anything. You look paralysed, but under the surface you are very agitated.



Stress and the Brain



- 30 seconds
- Stress damages almost all cognitions
 - Memory, organisation, motor skills, immune response, sleep, etc.
- Your brain can't distinguish between physical and psychological threats
- Cortisol
 - Very strong, too much is risky
 - If stress is continual the brain can override the message to 'turn off' and cortisol begins making long lasting changes
 - Inhibits learning and memory



Physiological Signs of Stress

- Heart pounding
- Headaches
- Stomach problems
- Skin rashes
- Cold hands
- Sleep
- Tight muscles



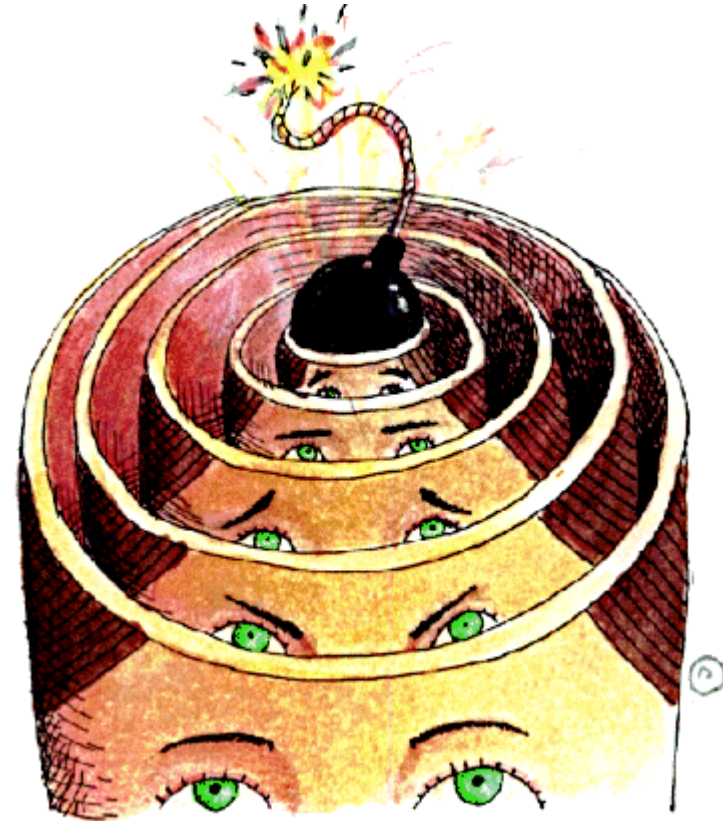
Emotional Signs of Stress

- Moody
- Irritable
- Depressed
- Anxious
- Angry
- Nervous
- Upset
- Loss of humour



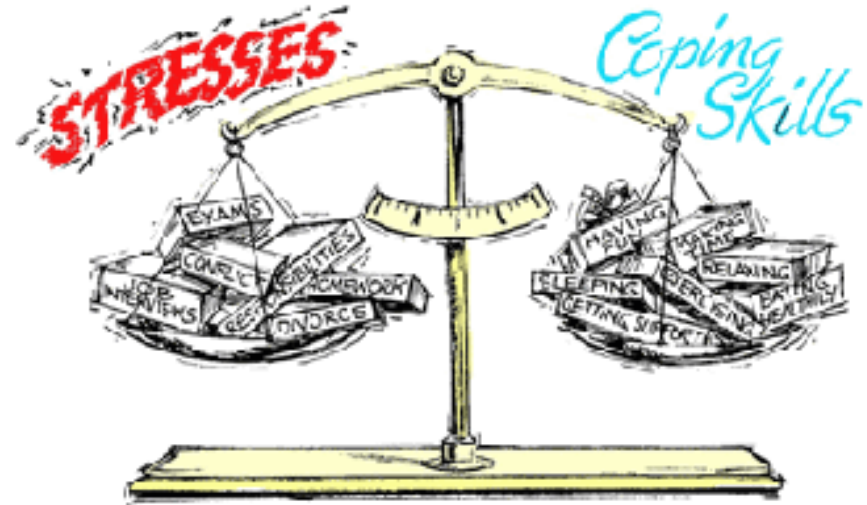
Behavioural Signs of Stress

- Forgetful
- Loss of concentration
- Poor judgement
- Disorganised
- Confused
- Lack of interest
- Stop thinking
- Negative self-talk



Coping Strategies

- Health diet
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Relaxation
- Organisation
- Limit procrastination
- Ask for help

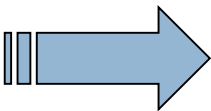


How Parents Can Help

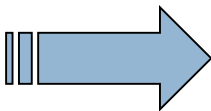
- Talk with them about stress
- Explain how it works
- Discuss how you deal with stress
- Problem solve together
- Encourage healthy habits
- Positive self-talk
- Teaching teenagers to name feelings without blame
- Accepting that emotions aren't good or bad, they just are
- Pause and reflect on a thought
- Assertive communication skills



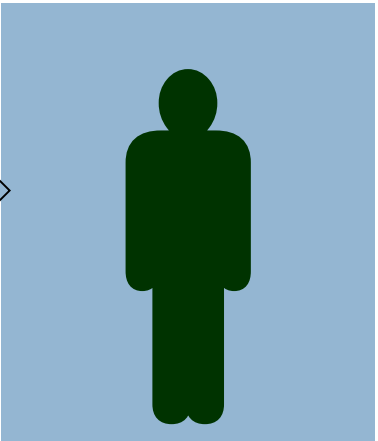
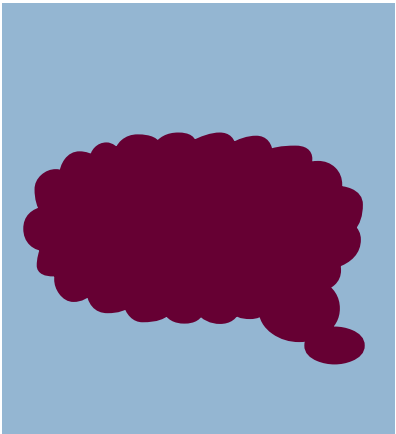
**WHAT
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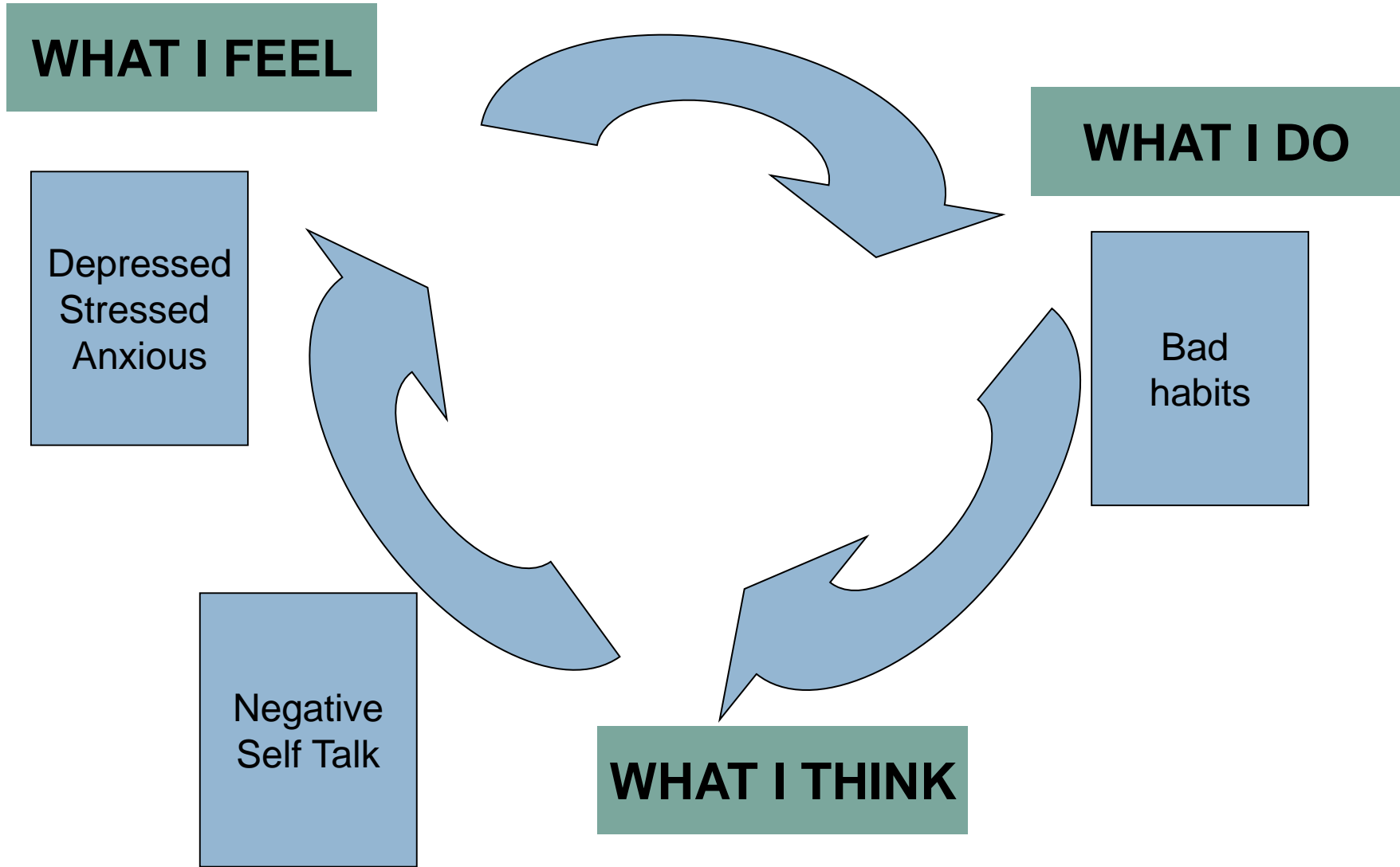


**WHAT
I
FEEL**



**WHAT
I
DO**

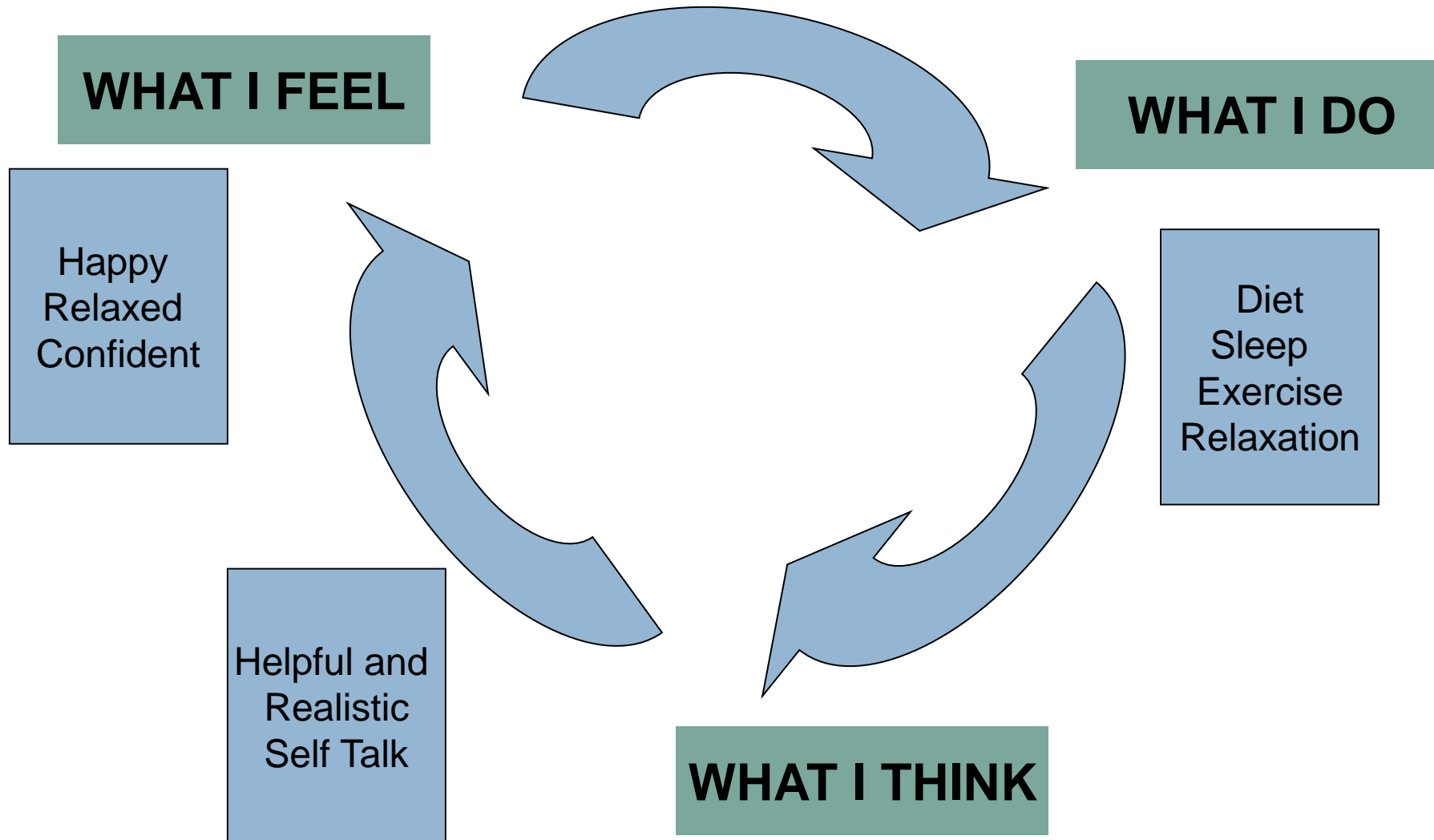




Negative Focus

- You focus on the negative, ignoring or misinterpreting positive aspects of a situation. You focus on your weaknesses and forget your strengths.
- You tend to have fixed rules and unrealistic expectations, regularly using the words 'should', 'ought', 'must' and 'can't'. This leads to unnecessary guilt and disappointment.





Mindfulness Meditation

- Decreases stress response
- Improves mood and fatigue
- Improves concentration, attention and memory
- Improves cognitive flexibility
- Improves pain tolerance
- Happiness



Thank you

- Any questions?



Resources

- <https://parents.au.reachout.com/skills-to-build/wellbeing/coping-skills-resilience-and-teenagers>
- <https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issues/stress-and-teenagers>
- <https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>
- How to Make Stress Your Friend - Kelly McGonigal TED Talk

