HELPING CHILDREN AND TEENS MANAGE STRESS IN A NEW COUNTRY

Children and teens might think, feel, and act differently.

Children and teens who have been forced to leave their country have been through difficult and often scary events. Difficult events and moving to a new country can change how children and teens think, feel, and act.

Young children often do not have the words to express how they feel, so they express their emotions with behaviors. **Young children might**:

- \+ Have trouble sleeping, have nightmares, or wet the bed
- \+ Behave more aggressively
- \+ Behave as if they are younger than they really are
- \+ Have stomache aches or headaches
- \+ Be afraid to separate from a parent or caregiver
- \+ Be unable to calm themselves if they are upset
- \+ Stay focused on past scary events by acting them out

IF YOUR CHILD BEHAVES INAPPROPRIATELY

- ✓ Stay calm and help them identify their emotions
- ✓ Tell them about better ways to express their feelings
- ✓ Remind them about what works best to calm them down

Teens might have difficulty putting how they are feeling into words or may feel shame, guilt or confusion about their feelings. **Teens might**:

- \+ Worry about their safety and the safety of their friends and family
- \+ Stay focused on past scary events by talking about it, drawing it, or worrying about it
- \+ Have trouble concentrating or remembering things
- \+ Feel irritable, angry or sad
- \+ Want to be alone a lot
- \+ Have stomach aches and headaches
- \+ Sleep too much or too little

IF A TEEN BEHAVES INAPPROPRIATELY

- ✓ Calmly remind them of rules and consequences
- ✓ Talk to them later about what helps calm them down and manage their feelings

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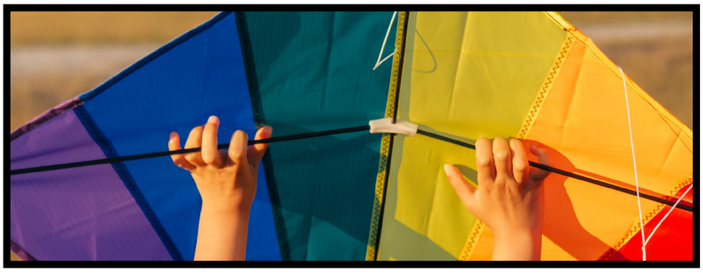
MANAGING STRESS IN A NEW COUNTRY

Parents can help their children adapt.

Children and teens are resilient and with love, support and consistency, they can heal and adjust to their new environment. Because parents and caregivers know and love their child, they are in the best position to help their child heal from past events, manage worries, and adjust to a new home.



- Spend time together doing familiar things like flying a kite, playing chess, or singing a song.
- Tell younger children when you need to go away for a short while and when you will be back.
- Keep children away from frightening images on TV and social media.
- Let children and teens talk about what happened to them or their feelings by talking, drawing, or acting.
- Help children and teens understand that their feelings are normal.
- Tell teens that this process is hard and you are there to support them.
- Ask teens questions about their day or about their experience with resettlement and listen to their answers.
- Work with children and teens to identify activities or groups, like sports or clubs, where they can express themselves and make friends.

Some children need more support.

Sometimes managing stress is not enough and people may want or need more support. Parents can get more help from their child's doctor, school, caseworker, or a counselor.

+ Have problems with their mood, behavior, or physical health that do not improve with time
+ Have trouble regaining a skill they previously learned
+ Are involved in harmful behavior like alcohol, drugs, or gangs
+ Talk about harming themselves or others

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Anyone who feels life is not worth living or if someone is having thoughts about harming themselves, they should call **988** or **+1 (800) 273-8255** right away.

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