Stress Reduction

We all experience stress, despite however old or young we are. The stress response starts in the brain, in the amygdala. The amygdala is an almond shaped region of the medial temporal lobe in each hemisphere of the brain. It is part of the limbic system and affects emotional processes, attention, memory formation and decision making. The amygdala is associated with fear responses and preparing for emergencies. It will take over when it thinks you’re in a dangerous situation. Unfortunately it doesn’t know the difference between a zombie apocalypse, a traffic jam, and a math test. It will hijack the brain so you can’t think clearly. Your brain goes into survival mode, and you have one of these reactions: Fight, flight, or freeze.

Signs that you or your child are having a stress response:

- Strong emotional reaction
- Sudden onset
- Post-episode realization if reaction was inappropriate

We can’t eliminate stress from our lives, but we can learn to manage our stress response and learn strategies to calm down. There are lots of ways to de-stress, some healthier than others. Here are a few ideas that work well for both children and adults:

- Practice mindfulness, being in the present moment, acknowledging how you feel right now
- Do a grounding meditation:
  - Find 5 things you see
  - Find 4 things you feel
  - Find 3 things you hear
  - Find 2 things you smell
  - Find 1 thing you taste
- Watch a funny movie or laugh
- Exercise or spend time doing a hobby you enjoy
- Talk about your feelings with a friend, a loved one, or a trusted adult, like your friendly school counselors Karen, Jen, and Lori!

Sources: Britannica.com
specialmomadvocate.com