

THE OFFICIAL  
MAGAZINE  
OF THE CENTRE  
FOR STUDIES ON  
HUMAN STRESS

The Centre  
for Studies on  
Human Stress  
is dedicated to  
improving the  
physical and  
mental health  
of individuals  
by empowering  
them with  
scientifically  
grounded  
information  
about the effects  
of stress on the  
brain and body.



Hôpital  
Louis-H. Lafontaine



Welcome to the **third year** of Mammoth Magazine! We would like to take this opportunity to let our readers know that the Centre for Studies on Human Stress (CSHS) is celebrating its second birthday with a move to a new home. We are now at the Fernand-Seguin Research Centre of the Louis-H. Lafontaine Hospital affiliated to the University of Montreal. The director of the CSHS, Sonia Lupien Ph.D., recently accepted a position as the Scientific Director of the Research Centre, which includes Louis-H. Lafontaine, Rivière-des-Prairies and Pinel Hospitals. Although our website at Louis-H. is still under construction, you may nonetheless browse our sections by going to [www.humanstress.ca](http://www.humanstress.ca). We are planning many interesting and interactive upgrades to our website and will keep you informed as to when we will officially launch our new and improved site. Now down to the business of stress and school.

## Are your Kids NUTS about School ?

Editorial by Tania Elaine Schramek B.A., M.Sc.

**T**he avid Mammoth reader knows that there is no reason to go NUTS over stress and that NUTS are NUTS whether you are a 45 year old man on the job market or a 5 year old child about to enter school. For those of you who come to Mammoth Magazine for the first time, let us explain.

Contrarily to popular belief, **stress is not the result of time pressure or work overload**. If this were the case, then older adults that are retired and young

children (both of whom do not deal with work overload or much time pressure) would not be vulnerable to stress. Well over 50 years of scientific research on stress tells us that this is entirely untrue. Older adults (55 +) and children are particularly vulnerable to stress compared to working adults. Why? It's simple, because the brain of a child is developing and the brain of the older adult is well, getting older. As you will see (and as it has been explained in volume 2 of *Mammoth Magazine*), the brain is a very important player where stress is concerned.

## Are your Kids NUTS about School?

### What's the Deal with NUTS?

So how do NUTS figure into all this? One thing needs to be clear, the stressful things in our lives (i.e. stressors) do not make us sick, but the body's response to those stressors definitely can. The body responds to stressors by releasing the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol. But more specifically, it is when our **brain** perceives a stressor that it starts a cascade of events resulting in the release of our stress hormones. We also know that stress hormones manage their way back into

into elevations in stress hormone levels. One article in this issue will describe the results of a study we conducted on the matter and explain why intervening (i.e. with children) may help to prevent the later development of stress-related problems like cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety disorders. Due to the large amount of evidence showing that stress can indeed lead to both physical and mental health problems and because we have received several questions from the media and general public via emails or the telephone, we felt it important to devote an entire issue to the stress associated with going to school or school transitions.

France Marin will help you identify signs of anxiety in your children and summarize tips provided by Dr. Turgeon on how to navigate through back to school events and over the course of the school year.

Just above I spoke about the stress associated with school transitions, a time when the Kings and Queens of the castle lose their status and become regular members of the court. This period is so critical that we have created an entire program designed to help children recognize, understand, and cope with stress during the transition period and for the rest of their lives. In her article, Nathalie Wan, the research coordinator at the

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the brain and affect cognitive processes like learning and memory. For kids in school, this spells trouble.

What scientific research on stress also tells us is that in humans, the only things that get the whole stress cascade going (other than major stressors like earthquakes) are situations we face that are either **N**ovel, **U**npredictable, **T**hreaten our ego (i.e. our sense of self, how we view ourselves, our self-esteem), and that decrease our **S**ense of control, hence **NUTS**. This is true for all age groups, each sex, and place in the social hierarchy (rich, poor, or somewhere in between). This is why stress is such an individual phenomenon because what is novel to you may not be novel to your neighbour.

### NUTS about School?

Thus children entering school will likely have to contend with NUTS, in fact starting school represents NUTS in all their glory! For first timers entering school is definitely Novel (totally new experience) and Unpredictable (kids do not know what to expect), involves a Threat to the ego (will I make friends?), and very often they have a low Sense of control over the situation (they have no choice to go and do not have a say in how things will take place). This is also true of children changing schools and for those making the transition from primary school to high school.

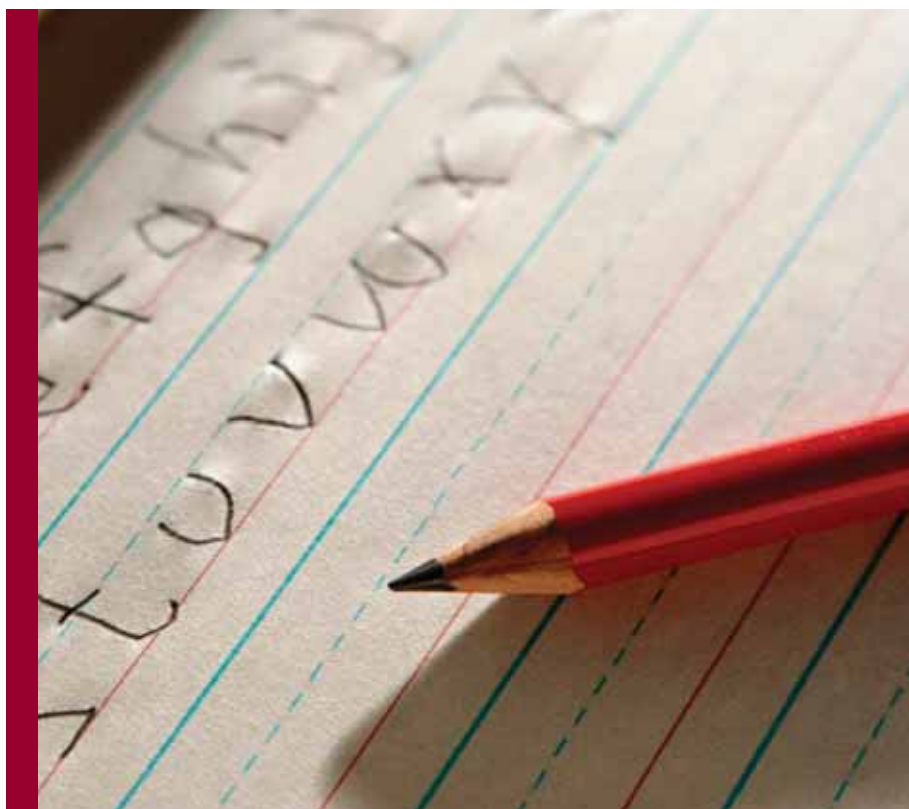
With respect to the latter, we know for a fact that children perceive school transitions as stressful and some may even feel some anxiety. These perceptions translate

### Let's Break it Down

In the first article of this issue Marie-France Marin, a graduate student at the CSHS, or as we call it the Stress Centre, reports on a recent interview she conducted with Lyse Turgeon Ph.D., a researcher at the Fernand-Seguin Research Centre (Rivière des Prairies Pavilion), who specializes in anxiety problems over the lifespan but who places particular emphasis on anxiety in children. In her article, Marie-

Stress Centre who also helped to create and coordinates the *DeStress for Success* program we introduced in Volume 1 of *Mammoth Magazine*, will provide a description of the series of workshops held in schools and explain the impetus for *DeStress for Success*.

The last section of this issue holds two articles written by graduate students at the CSHS, which will provide parents with tips



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*...the stresses faced by your children do not just show up on the first day of school and then leave until they transition into high school. The first few **months** of school are full of situations involving NUTS.*

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and strategies to deal with school-related stress. The first article, by Kamala Pilgrim, deals with stressors faced by primary school children and the other by Robert Paul Juster, talks about the challenges of high school. Just before these two helpful pieces I have written a small guide with helpful clues on how to recognize stress in your child and tips that apply to children of all ages. Finally, at the end of this issue you will find a diagram and a check list that will help you to recognize signs of acute stress and anxiety in your child.

That being said, I need to make a few disclaimers. First you might note that a few of the tips given come up more than once. This is not the result of poor editing but rather an attempt to help the reader to remember key points. Repetition is actually one of many strategies for memorization (for more tips about memory see our website at [www.hlhl.qc.ca/stress](http://www.hlhl.qc.ca/stress)). We use repetition all the time, think of what you do when someone gives you a phone number to dial, you repeat it over and over in your head. Recall back to your days as a student; repetition surely was part of your study routine. The same principle



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*Learning early on how to recognize and cope with stress is an essential set of tools they will need in order to become **resilient** in the face of stress.*

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applies here. Now for disclaimer number two. Many of you will read this issue **after** the first day of school and may think that what we discuss no longer applies. Nothing could be further from the truth. The tips and suggestions we put forth can actually be used all year long and hopefully will be!

We refer to the back to school **weeks** precisely because the stresses faced by your children do not just show up on the first day of school and then leave until they transition into high school. The first few months of school are full of situations involving NUTS. For instance, it is highly unlikely that your child will become 'best friends for life' with someone on the first day. For primary school, the first few weeks are designed to allow the children to get to know one another and to become familiar with the goings on of the school environment. As such, NUTS will all still be at play. Two months into school your

child might be asked to speak in front of the class; novelty, threat to the ego, low sense of control... sound familiar anyone? The same goes for high school.

One key point we would like to make is that the last thing we want is for children to develop allergies to NUTS! We cannot avoid all the stressors in our lives nor should we try

set of tools they will need in order to become resilient in the face of stress. This is likely one of the best gifts we can give to our children and we concede, one of the most difficult to deliver. Parents can certainly guide their children and serve as buffers for stress but be careful to not cross the line between being a buffer and a brick wall that stress cannot penetrate.

So, we now invite you to enjoy this issue of Mammoth Magazine and hope we may be of help in guiding your children through

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*We cannot avoid all the stressors in our lives nor should we try to protect our children from ever experiencing stress in theirs.*

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to protect our children from ever experiencing stress in theirs. In fact doing so would be more harmful than good as they may end up having poor resistance to stress later in life and crumble to pieces when they face their first major stressor. Learning early on how to recognize and cope with stress is an essential

what adults often look back onto as being the best years of their life. Our children may not always see it that way while in the thick of things but we here at the CSHS are certain that cracking NUTS will help along the way and provide good opportunities for you to enjoy this precious time with your children.



# A Researcher's Profile : Lyse Turgeon, Ph. D.

## *A Career Devoted to the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents*

Written by Marie-France Marin  
Translated by Robert-Paul Juster

**L**yse Turgeon is an associate professor and director of graduate studies at the school of psychoeducation at the University of Montreal. She is also a researcher at the Fernand-Seguin Research Centre of Louis-H. Lafontaine Hospital and at Rivière-des-Prairies Hospital. Her work focuses on the development of treatment and prevention programs for youth with anxiety disorders. She also aims to better understand the risk factors associated with the development of anxiety disorders in children. Indeed, she has recently published a book on the subject<sup>1</sup>.

Contrary to many researchers who spend much of their careers in a linear direction, Dr. Turgeon followed a different kind of trajectory, albeit no less fascinating. Over the course of her master's degree in developmental psychology at UQAM, Dr. Turgeon became particularly interested in the normal development of children. She studied, among other subjects, the development of language and socialization of children. She worked afterwards in community health before developing programs for the prevention of school and family violence. It is during the course of her doctorate in clinical psychology attained at the University of Laval that she developed an expertise in the domain of anxiety in adults. As part of her clinical practicum, Dr. Turgeon had the opportunity to question adults suffering from anxiety disorders about the source of their anxiety. In so doing, she was stunned by the extent to which the majority of them seemed to have experienced their first bouts of fear and anxiety during the course of their childhood. However, at that time, very few researchers worked on youth problems with anxiety disorders. This was the clenching factor for Dr. Turgeon. Her post-doctorate in psychiatry at the University of Montreal and the beginning of her career as a researcher have given her the chance to conciliate two domains of principle interest, namely, anxiety disorders and child development.



*As part of her clinical practicum, Dr. Turgeon had the opportunity to question adults suffering from anxiety disorders about the source of their anxiety. In so doing, she was stunned by the extent to which the majority of them seemed to have experienced their first bouts of fear and anxiety during the course of their childhood.*

There seems to be a genetic predisposition towards the development of anxiety disorders. This being said, genes are rarely the sole or unique determinant of a developmental trajectory. Experience often counts for a lot. Our kids will not randomly develop an anxiety disorder over night. Dr. Turgeon mentions that the development of anxiety happens

in a gradual manner. « In fact, before the presence of the problem, **there are generally some precursor signs and these can be detected very early on, even as young as preschool** », she explains. Children who are constantly afraid to confront new situations, who have the tendency to play in isolation or who have difficulty separating



*Even as an adult, if we have many fears and are overprotecting our children, we risk sending our children the message that the world is dangerous and that they do not have the capabilities to face things.*

themselves from their parents can present a greater risk. However, you must not panic and necessarily consult a psychologist as soon as these signs are manifested in your child. In fact, Dr. Turgeon stresses the point that we have an important role to play as a parent. Granted there is nothing we can do regarding the genetic baggage of our youngsters, we can nonetheless be important actors in the acquisition of our youngster's experiences. She mentions that we cannot hesitate to encourage our young to confront situations, all the while guiding them through these processes. Even as an adult, if we have many fears and are overprotecting our children, we risk sending our children the message that the world is dangerous and that they do not have the capabilities to face things. It is therefore important to work on our own behaviours in order to offer a positive model to our children. According to Dr. Turgeon, we should encourage our children to develop a sense of mastery over their environment, starting at an early age.

### **Anxiety and start of the new school year**

As you will have noticed in this issue, the start of the new school year represents a source of stress for many children and adolescents. But does this necessarily mean that it causes them anxiety? «Indeed it can», says Dr. Turgeon. In fact, there will probably be a stress reaction that is totally normal in the majority of youngsters and is specific to this situation, but for certain youngsters, this response will continue and will generalize to a larger context than the stressor itself.

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*...there are generally some precursor signs and these can be detected very early on, even as young as preschool »*

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Dr. Turgeon mentions that there are different signs that can indicate to us if our youngster suffers from anxiety when facing the start of the new school year. Again, an important point to make is that there is not a clear rule of thumb for all; the signs vary from one child to another. Some children verbalize their fears, while others will have sleep problems or will be in a bad mood, and even others may have somatic complaints, such as a tummy ache. All these signs can be normal reactions in the face of a stressor, but it is effectively their persistence over the course of time that will make the difference between an adaptation to stress or a lack of habituation characteristic of anxiety.



Dr. Turgeon maintains that it is important to begin the process of preparation a long time in advance. Do not hesitate to go visit the school, to attend integration meetings with your youngster, to make them verbalize their worries, uncertainty and anticipation, and to explain to them how their first day will go. Furthermore, it is important to explain to children what they will receive from school in terms of learning new things for example (like reading) or even establishing new friendships.

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*...the development of anxiety happens in a gradual manner.*

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To conclude, Dr. Turgeon is aware of the fact that while we have come a long way in terms of researching anxiety in children and adolescents, there still remains a lot of work to do. In the next couple of years, she intends to devote her efforts to the amelioration of preventative measures tackling the development of anxiety disorders. «Once the anxiety disorder is in place, there are already negative consequences for the youngster», she says. This is why, over the course of the coming years, she will concentrate principally on finding ways to facilitate the identification of at risk youngsters and to develop ways to better equip parents when facing this problem.

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1. To learn more about anxiety disorders in children and adolescents, you can consult the book written by Dr. Turgeon: *Les troubles anxieux chez l'enfant et l'adolescent*.





# DeStress for Success

*Coming to a school near you!*

Written by: Nathalie Wan B.A., M.A.

**A new school environment**, raging hormones, exams, body image issues, GPA requirements, peer pressure, and a pile of homework longer than the Great Wall of China - stress, stress, and more stress! The issues facing our young adolescents today are abundant as they engage in what seems like an endless transition from childhood to adulthood, filled with increasing responsibilities, expectations, and a myriad of pressure.

Research has shown that high levels of stress are linked to a wide range of physical and mental health problems, as well as cognitive impairments like memory deficits. Depression, anxiety, anorexia, suicide, drugs abuse, and low self-esteem, are just some of the serious problems teens today experience. Furthermore, many of the ailments experienced during adolescence continue into adulthood. Therefore, learning to recognize stress and to how to develop coping strategies early in life is imperative for long-term physical and mental health.

With this in mind, the Centre for Studies on Human Stress (CSHS), created the *DeStress for Success* program – a unique program that educates young adolescents about the effects of stress on learning, memory and mental health, and trains them to recognize, manage and cope with stress.

## Why was DeStress for Success Program Created

This program came about because of the results of a study conducted by the director of the Stress Centre, Sonia Lupien and her col-

*...the DeStress for Success program - a unique program that educates young adolescents about the effects of stress on learning, memory and mental health, and trains to recognize, manage and cope with stress.*

leagues. The study initially looked at whether poverty could be a source of stress for children between the ages of 6 and 12 that would be reflected in high levels of stress hormones. Indeed, the results confirmed this notion. But when the time of the school transition came around all of the children showed significant rises in stress hormones irrespective of their family's financial means.

It is well known that high levels of stress hormones negatively affect learning and memory processing. Now, what do kids do for a living? They learn and remember, that's what school is all about. As such, we found it critical to develop a program that could reach children early in order to prevent stress-related cognitive impairments and the development of stress related physical and mental health problems.

## The NUTS and Bolts of the Program

*DeStress for Success* targets children of Grades 6 and 7, pre-teens who make the transition from Elementary school to High School. Indeed, school transition is reported by many teenagers as being a period of high stress due to the novelty of the high school environment, as well as the sense of low control that may emerge from the unpredictability of friendships and the novelty of new school demands i.e. NUTS.

The program also targets 10<sup>th</sup> graders, as the educators and school counselors that helped us to develop the program have reported that students in Grade 10 express heightened levels of stress compared to 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Grade 10 students are exposed, for the first time, to provincial exams and their marks are often evaluated when applying to college or CEGEP, thus posing great academic demand. Moreover, grade 10 and 11 students are faced with choosing the college program they will enter that in many ways lays the foundation for the education and career paths they will go down.

The program consists of 7 workshops lead by a by the team of graduate students studying at the CSHS. Each workshop has been creatively designed to offer teenagers

fundamental information and tools to recognize and manage stress. Even though the program is presented in a groups setting it is nonetheless individually tailored because as we have seen stress is a highly individual phenomenon. As well, every workshop presents a topic on stress using interactive discussions and promoting student participation and exchanges. The 7 workshops are split into three main topics. The topics include:

## TOPIC 1 (Workshops 1 & 2) Recognizing Stress: The NUTS Model

LOGBOOK 1

(Exercises to be given at the end of Workshop 1)

(DAY 1)

Did anything stressful happen today?

If yes, what happened? Make a list of all the things that made you feel stressed.

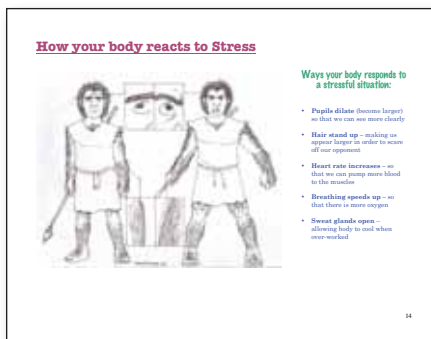
1. _____	New	Unpredictable	Threat to life	Sense of Control (low)
2. _____	New	Unpredictable	Threat to life	Sense of Control (low)
3. _____	New	Unpredictable	Threat to life	Sense of Control (low)
4. _____	New	Unpredictable	Threat to life	Sense of Control (low)
5. _____	New	Unpredictable	Threat to life	Sense of Control (low)

Beside each situation that made you stressed, circle which element(s) of the N.U.T.S. model is included.

What exactly is stress? The first topic involves the description of what "stress" is, and ways to recognize it. A stressful situation is characterized by four main attributes: **N**ovelty, **U**npredictability, **T**hreat to the person and

a low **Sense of Control (NUTS)**. Students participate in interactive games that teach them these characteristics and how to recognize and remember them (using the acronym “NUTS” for instance). Students are given their own personal Logbook to write in during the course of the program. For their first Logbook activity, students are asked to describe situations experienced during the week that they felt were stressful and then try to identify which of the NUTS elements best characterize the situation. This teaches students how to recognize stressors and will teach them that different characteristics of NUTS can lead to a stress reaction. Consequently, this will help each student contextualize the elements that determine a stress response.

## TOPIC 2 (Workshops 3 & 4) How Do I Recognize My Own Stress? The Body's Stress Response

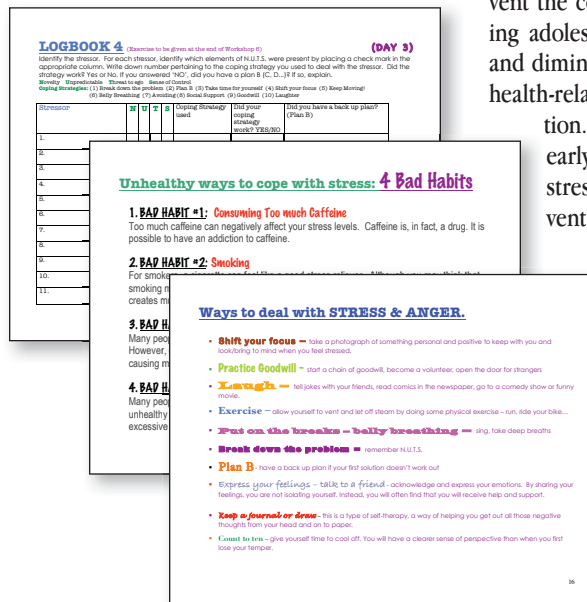


The second topic involves teaching students how to recognize when they are stressed. Specifically, students are taught about the primary purpose of a stress response, notably, energy mobilization and the different physical and emotional changes that occur during the stress response. For example, in order to help them to recognize what a stress response actually is, we have them do push-ups! We let them know that the tensed muscles, accelerated breathing, and sweat... all occur when we have a stress response. For their Logbook activity, students are asked to describe situations that may have led to a stress response, and to describe the physiological changes they experienced. Students are also asked how they rid themselves of the pent up energy. (E.g. did they bike around the block? Walk their dog?). With this knowledge, children and adolescents learn to recognize the signs associated with being stressed, which will then allow them to implement strategies to diminish the stress-response.

## TOPIC 3 (Workshops 5, 6 & 7) How Do I Prevent and Cope With Stress?



The third topic involves helping students recognize the different methods that someone can use to deal with a stressful situation (avoidance, emotion-based coping, strategy-based coping). The information and activities in the workshops help them to understand that each of these methods is by itself a good coping strategy, although its efficiency may depend on the stressor and context. Logbook activities on methods of dealing with stress are provided to the students. From this, students are exposed to various coping strategies that may be useful for them in dealing with their own stressful experiences. In addition, they are made aware of the negative impact of maladaptive coping strategies.



## DeStress for Success: Coming to a school near you!

To test the efficacy of the *DeStress for Success* program, the CSHS is launching a research project this Fall. The research project is funded by the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD) – The World's Leading Charity Dedicated to Mental Health Research.

In this research project, 1,080 children of low and high socioeconomic-status schools, from both the English and French Montreal School Boards, will be tested. The research project will test the efficacy of the *DeStress for Success* program using measures of stress hormone levels in saliva, as well as measures of cognitive and psychological well-being. To date, a number of schools across the Greater Montreal Area have expressed great interest and necessity to have the program provided to their students.

Unique in its design and concept, the *DeStress for Success* program is the only project of its kind worldwide. Importantly, positive outcomes derived from the research project may have major implications for children and teenagers in transition. By providing young adolescents with the tools necessary to combat the negative impact of stress experienced during times of transition, we may prevent the common ailments experienced during adolescence that persist into adulthood and diminish quality of life. In medicine and health-related fields the best cure is prevention. Teaching children and adolescents early on how to recognize and cope with stress will surely go a long way in preventing the later onset of stress-related health problems. Given the skyrocketing rates of depression, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes in the world of today we hope that our program will have a large impact.

# NUTS and Nut Crackers

By Tania Elaine Schramek, B.A., M.Sc.

**R**eady to crack some NUTS? The following two articles will discuss the specifics of stress associated with elementary and high school respectively. Before we move on to these highly informative pieces we thought it might be helpful to include some general tips that apply to children of all ages and more specifically to parents. As was mentioned earlier, parents can serve as buffers for the stress of their children. But! But! But! In order to do so parents must first recognize and cope with their **own** stress.

We commonly hear statements like “my kids pick up on my tension”, “children can sense their parents’ emotional states”. This is indeed true. We in the stress world like to call these spillover effects, in other words, parental stress can be felt by and affect children. In fact, we showed that children of mothers who scored high on a questionnaire about life stresses and depressive symptoms had higher levels of stress hormones than did children of mothers with low to moderate scores. Thus children respond physiologically to parental

for are any progressive or abrupt behavioural changes. If for instance you have an exuberant child always full of life that is becoming more and more quiet and withdrawn there is likely a problem. The same goes for the quiet child that all of a sudden begins to act out. In fact, acting out irrespective of your child’s behavioural profile is a sign to look out for. In many cases it can stem from the repeated energy mobilizations that occur every time one has a stress response. This pent up energy has to come out somehow!

Stress also has a tendency to affect sleeping patterns. If your child takes considerably longer to fall asleep they might be replaying events of the day in their head or worrying about what is to come tomorrow (sound familiar mom and dad?). Changes in appetite or frequent tummy aches can signal mild digestive problems that are often seen when one is under stress (to understand why see *Mammoth Magazine*, volume 2). Heightened emotionality is also a tell tail sign that stress is lurking around. For instance, if a slight rep-

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emotional states. As such, recognizing the sources of NUTS in one’s life and working on finding solutions to stressful situations is the first place a parent can start to help their children cope with the NUTS in their lives (see box 1 and, for more information on how to do so, see also the “Deconstructing Stress” and “Coping with Stress” section of our website [www.hlhl.qc.ca/stress](http://www.hlhl.qc.ca/stress)).

## Recognizing the Stressed Child

Now that parental stress is under control (see box 1), what can we do to help our children navigate through the first few months of school and beyond? The first thing a parent can do is to **recognize** that their child is under stress. The best way to do this is to know and observe your child. What we are looking

rimand that would typically lead to a sad face results in water works worthy of an aqua park or storming out of the room then those lovely stress hormones are likely a flowing! Ultimately though, parents are the best judge of when their child is, well, just not like themselves. Trust your gut and then talk to your child. As you will note this one will come up a lot.

## Dealing with the Stressed Child

### Novelty

The beginning of the school year is not the best time to start your kids in **new** extra-curricular activities. They already have enough with the novelty of the school environment to

## Let’s take the following example

“That Janet at work just gets on my last nerve. She always contradicts what I say in front of the boss and I simply cannot work with her”! How to cope with this type of stress? Simple, by DECONSTRUCTING STRESS. Here’s how to do it.

**Find some time for yourself** after the emotions have passed and ask yourself “Why is Janet stressing me”? Is the situation **Novel**? **No**, Janet has been doing this for a long time now. Is the situation **Unpredictable**? **No**, Janet does it like clockwork. Is there a **Threat** to my ego? **BINGO**, by contradicting me in front of the boss she calls into question my competence as an employee. Is my **Sense of control** lowered? Perhaps a little, the way things stand, I don’t feel I have much control over the situation at work. You have already eliminated two potential factors that are triggering your stress response (novelty and unpredictability), leaving you with two explanations (threat to ego and low sense of control). Now, things are already less mixed up in your mind. All you have to do now is RECONSTRUCT your life *with* stress. Ask yourself what you could do to increase your sense of control e.g. talk to Janet.

Then see what you can do about decreasing the impact on you ego. Talk with your spouse or friend and go through something like this. **You** – “I find it hard to work with Janet because her actions cause me to question my competence at work”. **Spouse/friend** – “How was your last performance review at work”? **You** – “It was very good. Come to think of it, the areas I could improve on are not the things she contradicts me about”. **Spouse/friend** – “Could she feel that her job is in jeopardy, does she need to prove herself”? **You** – “You could be right... there have been major budget cuts and we have similar responsibilities”. The point being is to take the time to really think about what is stressing you, identify the “why” i.e. NUTS and then come up with the “how” to deal with it. Once you get the hang of deconstructing and reconstructing stress do it with your children. Obviously, you have to take the lead on this one but as they age you can start explaining to them how to crack NUTS!



contend with. If they have been playing the violin or play soccer (outdoor and indoor) then by all means do not take away what probably will serve as a good outlet for their feelings, stress, and energy. Don't forget that a stress response results in energy mobilization. Thus, encourage your child to move. Do not hesitate to run with your child when he/she gets back from school, to go to the swimming pool or to the park. If it is rainy outside, turn on the music and dance! This will help your child evacuate the mobilized energy.

### Unpredictability

This one is simple. Travel back in time and try to remember what your first days of school were like. What did it look like, what were your fears, what did you enjoy? Open dialogue! If you have an older child have them show your child the ropes.

### Threat to the Ego

Social support is one of the most effective weapons in your arsenal against the effects of stress. Now this support can come in the form of you being there for your child but also from those around them. Why not create a strong network **before** your child enters school? Typically the children going to local public schools have to live in the same neighborhood. While this might involve time, energy, and a few resources, why not have a "back to school" social in your backyard?

Have your kids help you design, put together and deliver invitations to a "bring your own burger" block party? There is bound to be a few kids in the area that are also entering school. If financial resources are an issue then just make it a lemonade and games party. One pad of coloured paper (4\$) for the invitations and 5 frozen lemonade cans (6\$) will do the trick! Or talk to the parents in your kids sum-

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***Don't forget that a stress response results in energy mobilization.***

***Thus, encourage your child to move. Do not hesitate to run with your child when he/she gets back from school, to go to the swimming pool or to the park. If it is rainy outside, turn on the music and dance!***

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***Ultimately though, parents are the best judge of when their child is, well, just not like themselves. Trust your gut and then **talk to your child.*****

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mer camp or in your neighborhood, some will certainly be entering school, so pair them up for a play date. Otherwise, have the party at the beginning of August. This way your child may make a few friends before school starts and they have the rest of the month of August to get to know one another.

School has already started? Your child goes to a private school? Your child goes to high school? No worries, just invite your child's homeroom class over on a Saturday. For the older child entering high school why not make it a movie night or an mp3 swap night? There are many possible permutations on the theme you could adopt (e.g. child goes to an all boys school, well have a video game contest). The point to this is to help in decreasing the threat to the ego associated with the "will I make friends" fear most children have. While we are on the topic of ego threats; ask your child what they feel they could be picked on about. Take it from there, you may identify

matters that bother your child early on and work through them before they even become a real issue that will follow them throughout school.

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***Social support is one of the most effective weapons in your arsenal against the effects of stress.***

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Now back to the party. By entering school **with** an existing social network established or by providing the backdrop for them to create one once school has started you will have provided your child with a really good buffer for stress. One word of caution, talk to your child about what is "in" and ask them to come up with some ideas, here you increase their sense of control and ensure that your party does not end up making them the "un-cool" one with the lame parents!

## NUTS and Nut Crackers

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Finally, in the first weeks of school, make an extra effort to reward your child's accomplishments. That way, the possible threat to the ego that school transitions can induce will be decreased because he/she will have gained confidence when school starts.

### Sense of Control

What should I wear? This question is often swimming around in the minds of kids today. While we have addressed ego threats above, here we would like to talk about your child's sense of control. Above we spoke of negative spillover effects. Like everything, there is also a positive side to spillover. Your child has little to no control over the events surrounding school. This does not mean that you cannot increase your child's sense of control. Indeed, what studies on stress are showing is the control does not have to be objective in order to decrease stress it can also be subjective control. Just having the feeling that we have control over a situation does the trick. However, you have to be tricky about it. The point is to increase their control on one or more aspect of their lives with the hopes that this increased sense of control will spillover onto the other NUTS present.

Where clothes are concerned why not start a tradition where they decide BUT you have one right of veto per outfit. This one will also help where ego threat is concerned. Let younger children decide what they want in their lunch (within reason of course) for the first month of school. This will act by increasing their sense of control over the situation. Indeed, the child may not be able to fully control the entry into a new school, but the mere feeling that he/she has control over some aspects (here, lunch) of the situation that involves school entry is what the brain needs to

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*If possible spread out shopping for school supplies over the course of the summer. Here we have to weigh the costs of taking advantage of the back to school sales and the **price we have to pay** to get them.*

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produce fewer stress hormones. For the older child, let them decide what the family activities will be on the weekends, if there is more than one child, then simply alternate turns.

Although there are many ways to decrease your child's stress, it is still very important to discuss the different NUTS elements that affect them. That way, you will be better able to target what makes school stressful for your child. Every child (and adult for that matter) will be more sensitive to certain elements of NUTS than another one. Thus, by asking questions, you will be better able to target which NUTS element(s) you should try to target the most.

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*Every child (and adult for that matter) will be more sensitive to certain elements of NUTS than another one.*

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### Last but not Least

School supplies. What ever possessed us to have a system in which we have to cram getting all the supplies needed for school two days before school starts or during the first week of school? Not only do we face long

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*The point is to increase their control on one or more aspect of their lives with the hopes that this increased sense of control will spillover onto the other NUTS present.*

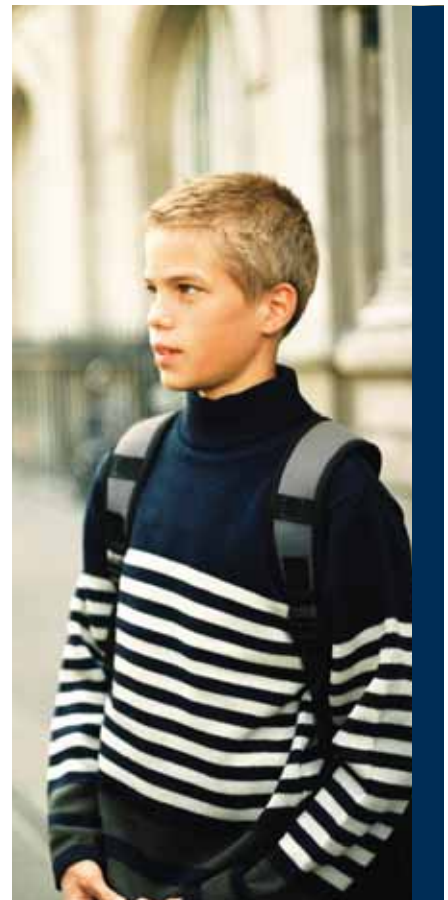
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lines etc but we also have to contend with back to school traffic, getting dinner ready, managing our own stress and helping our children with their issues. That's a tall order for even the best of the super parents out there. If possible spread out shopping for school supplies over the course of the summer. Here we have to weigh the costs of taking advantage of the back to school sales and the **price we have to pay** to get them. If we must do all this at the last minute why not make it easier on ourselves? Take a day or two before the first week of school to cook, cook, cook and freeze, freeze, freeze! Four healthy homemade frozen dinners and one night out at your favorite family restaurant can take the

pressure off. Keep the eating out night for the day you get the list of required books etc from the teachers and go shopping.

**Divide and conquer!** Get the whole family involved. Split the list of supplies into equal numbers of items and have a race (without running of course). See who can get all their items the fastest. Why not have the winner have first choice of backpacks or pencil case. The loser can choose what restaurant to go to that day. The point is to make the experience fun, we all have to do it but we can certainly change the how. For instance, have a joke telling session while waiting in line. This will not only get you laughing, which incidentally, is a great form of stress release, but it may make the grumpier ones around you laugh too.

Finally, keep in mind that NUTS can show up at any point in the school year don't forget to keep your nut crackers handy!



# Strategies for making the first days and weeks of elementary school less nerve racking

By: Kamala Pilgrim B.A., M.Sc.

## A different day

The alarm clock blares as the sunlight lightly highlights his pillow. He slowly opens his eyes, wondering immediately why this morning feels so very different from any other, and then, suddenly, he remembers: **Today is the first day of elementary school.**

Your usual groggy stroll to the coffee machine is abruptly interrupted by the sound of your little one, although not so little anymore, nearly knocking you over as he slams the bathroom door behind him mumbling something about not knowing what to wear to the first day of classes!

Yes, the first weeks and months of elementary school can be quite the trying time for parent and child alike. For the parent, seeing their child grow up at a pace that seems almost cruelly fast can invoke a strong desire to turn back the clock, even if just for a moment. At the same time, a strong sense of pride is often felt in knowing that one's child has now reached the maturity level required to grasp some of the key concepts needed to navigate successfully in the world.

## Sources of stress for the transitioning child

It is often believed that because children do not have as many concrete external obligations and responsibilities as adults do, they do not experience stress. Research at the *Centre for Studies on Human Stress* has repeatedly demonstrated the falsity of this reasoning, emphasizing the notion that unique aspects of the environment can be equally as stressful for people of all ages.

Any parent of a transitioning youngster will want to ensure that the move from home, pre-school, or daycare to elementary school is as smooth as possible for the child. Identifying some of the main aspects of school transitioning that may be the most stressful for the child is critical to making the experience a positive one for the entire family. The problem that often arises with small children is that they do not yet possess the intellectual capacity to detect stress in their environment, nor are they able to dissect a situation in order to understand what makes them stressed. This is where nut crackers comes into play. Indeed, a child may not be able to tell you why he/she is stressed, but even at 5 years of age, a child can easily tell you what is novel or unpredictable in a situation. Consequently, cracking NUTS in order to help you and your child understand what makes them stressed about school entry will be of great help.

As with any individual, the child's worries will mesh within the categories of the NUTS model. They might range from fears about being rejected by peers (**T**hreat to the ego), to concerns about having to juggle heavier amounts of homework (**S**ense of low control). The child may be concerned about having to find their way around a large school



environment while not knowing where classrooms and facilities are located (**U**npredictability) or may express a generally worry about the environment at school being new and unfamiliar (**N**ovelty).

These feelings are surely justified, but if experienced frequently and to a large extent, they could lead to substantial levels of stress and discomfort for the child. Trying the following tips may help to ease the transition.

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## Strategies for making the first days and weeks of elementary school less nerve racking

### Getting parents equipped

Parents can do a great deal to help their child to avoid the negative culmination of stress in their lives by communicating openly with the youngster but especially early on in the school year. Certain activities, when done just prior to or within the first months of school, will help to buffer against the generation of excessive anxiety, worry and stress in the child.

### Working with NUTS to Counteract Stress

#### Novelty

#### Visit school together

Many elementary schools will provide an open house and an orientation in order to allow parent and child to better acquaint themselves with the faculty, the facilities and the overall school environment. Also, attend parent-teacher conferences. We may have a tendency to underestimate these events, but they have a positive impact on children. At these sessions, parents can directly address some of the concerns that the child may have about not being able to find the washrooms, the gym, the Principal's office etc. Addressing these concerns early can provide a great sense of stability for the child. If the orientation was missed, the parent can ask to have a faculty member guide them and their child around the school on another occasion. If your child has already entered school but you see that he/she is still struggling with getting around (or getting around in a way that looks as though they know where they are going), then by all means visit the school with your child either before or after school one day and stay until the child feels comfortable and can show you around.

### Unpredictability

#### Converse with child

The first and most important thing to do is to frequently talk to the child about their concerns. Parents should take the time to sit down with the child in a comfortable environment and have the child share their sources of apprehension. Once they have expressed what

aspects of the school environment scare them or make them feel worried, the parent can try to provide answers that help to decrease some of the unpredictability associated with the events they mention. For example, if the child says that they are worried about not knowing what will take place throughout the school day, the parent can explain what a typical day would involve, from the time the bell rings at the beginning of the day, to the attendance call, the kinds of subjects they may cover, the timing of recess and lunch breaks and where they will be picked up at the end of the day to go home. Another way to explain what goes on in a school environment is to make a game of it. Simply sit your kids down (and maybe the neighbours kids) and get them guessing "What comes next in a typical day of school".

### Threat to ego

#### Role play

Many children may be very fearful about not being able to fit in with their peers. Going into a new place and not knowing a single soul is daunting for even an adult, thus it is critical to address this issue before hand. Even if the child does not explicitly express these concerns, it may still be helpful to re-enact scenarios that the child may encounter throughout the school day. For example, if the child tries to join a game on the playground that

has already begun, and he or she is unkindly rejected, the child could learn how to walk away from the scene without feeling badly or retaliating. The parent could also provide the child with healthy ways of being assertive but without having to resort to violence or harmful speech.

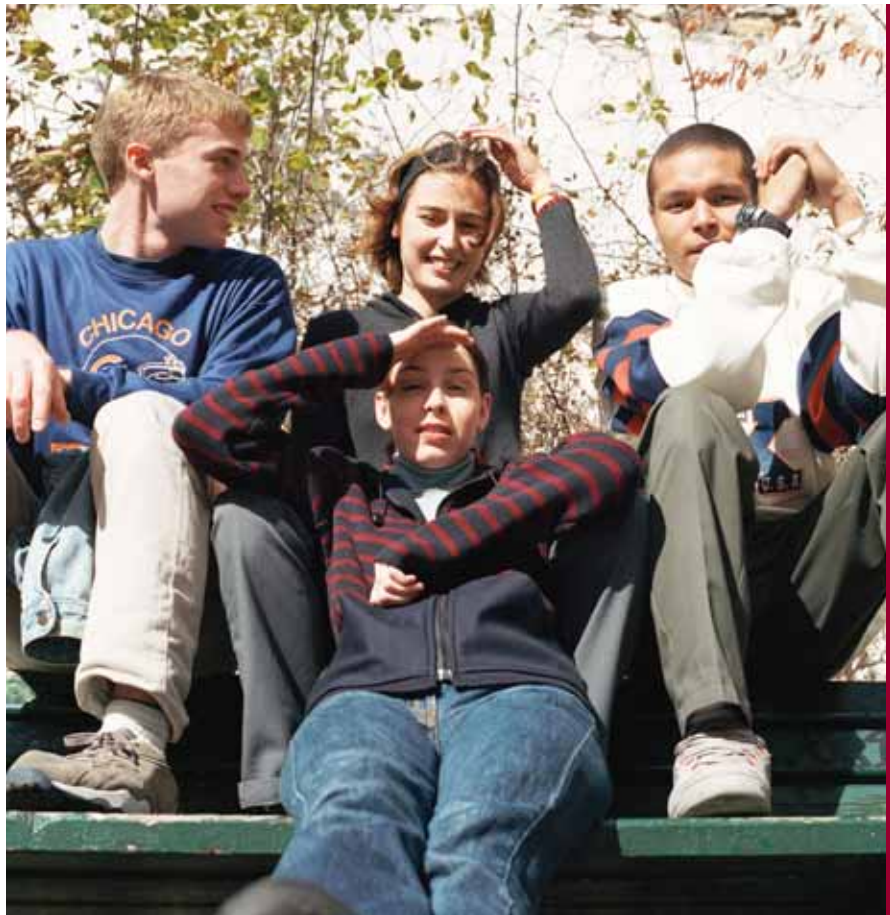
*Importantly, not all children can and do express how they are feeling and some still may have a hard time identifying what their feelings are or where they stem from.*

*This is when the parent becomes the key player in the game. Instead of asking your child what might be bothering them one can ask questions that have elements of the NUTS model embedded in them e.g. "do you find it troubling to not know what to expect next when you are at school (unpredictability), or have you met any new friends today or are your friends being nice to you (threat to the ego)"?*



As much as parents would like to protect their children from such occurrences sometimes the best efforts will not help the matter. It is also hard to explain to a child “why” other kids can be less than cordial. Although explaining to your child that people are sometimes unkind to others in order to feel better about themselves will help to explain what is happening, it will not take away the sting that comes from being rejected. So at this point, do what parents do best and comfort your child reassuring them that they are oh so very lovable and that they can always go to you when hurt or feeling down.

If the child is worried about being teased, the parent could help them to think about clever statements they could help them to deal successfully with the situation (i.e. increasing the sense of control). By guiding the child through the scenes without entirely telling them what they should do, the parent allows the child to come up with efficient strategies on their own. This kind of supportive activity helps the child to grow independently and also helps them to be aware of their own strengths. Regarding teasing it is essential that the child feels they can communicate with their parents or other adults. Teasing or bullying can escalate into life scaring events. No child should have to take teasing in silence, so open the lines of communication!




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*...do what parents do best and comfort your child reassuring them that they are oh so very lovable and that they can always go to you when hurt or feeling down.*

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## Sense of Control

### Create an Agenda

As a certain degree of uncontrollability is normal, it is important to communicate to children that the outcome of some situations will not always be in their hands. They will need to know the kinds of situations that they are capable of taking care of on their own, for instance, by using some of the strategies outlined as tips for decreasing unpredictability, but they will also need to be aware of other kinds of scenarios which would require faculty members such as teachers, nurses, other authority figures or the parent themselves, to intervene. Speak to the child about who they should go to if they are repeatedly bullied (physically or verbally) by a peer. Provide them with the names of individuals they can speak to throughout the day if they are feeling fearful or if they are feeling ill.

Have the child select an agenda that they can decorate and distinguish any way

they wish, therefore allowing them to express their unique identity and individuality. Write down the names and phone numbers of all persons you and the child agree would be important to have at close proximity in case of any emergency.

In addition, if the child mentions fears about not being able to manage the amount of course work, parents could sit together with their child and write a well formulated schedule in the agenda, listing the times that homework can be accomplished and penciling in all extra-curricular activities and at-home obligations in a clear fashion. Let your child decide on some of the time slots, turn the control over to them! Using this one agenda, the child will feel an increased sense of control and ability to achieve all of their dreams for the school year.

### Now you're ready!

Using these simple strategies will greatly diminish the amount of novelty, unpredictability, threat to the self and the sense of low control that are often a large part of the school transition period for youngsters. Of course the most important thing is to keep the line of communication open and flowing between parent and child throughout the year, allowing new issues that may arise to be addressed as well and as soon as possible. By equipping the child with specific tips for counteracting stress, one can be sure that the child's new experience will be highly enriching and rewarding.



# Learning Means-Ends Thinking

By: Robert P. Juster

**B**y the time your children enter high school, they will have already experienced at least six years of schooling - six years of trials and tribulations! For many also, this will be a shocking switch from the top of the primary school pecking order, in terms of age and body size, smack down to the bottom as the youngest and smallest newcomers. Entering this milestone will inevitably present old and new challenges to adapt to, and this period will be instrumental in your child's social, vocational, and educational development into an autonomous adult. The transition into high school thus marks a period of rapid intellectual and physical maturity that molds one's sense of self and purpose.

Learning to mentally manage one's stressors is essential for a healthy mind and body at every stage of the lifespan. During high-school years, perhaps more so than ever, this ability to cope is vital since the stress-relieving skills learnt in adolescence shape the arsenal of defenses used in young adulthood and beyond. It is therefore important to foster honest communication to help guide your kids through this period of great change. Contrary to young children who do not possess the intellectual capacity to dissect (or deconstruct) a stressful situation, teenagers have developed the intellectual skills in order to fully understand what stress is, what it implies, and how to deconstruct it. You can now get your teenagers to crack some NUTS and help them

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*Research has shown that increased stress in young adolescents can be related to decreased academic grades, attendance, and extra-circular activities. You can help your youngsters by not making rules that will prevent them from being exposed to stressors (this is simply not possible), but rather by sensitively breaking down and working through the stressors that affect them most.*

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An important factor that can make this transition more difficult is psychological stress. The components of the NUTS model will, as always, be at play during the transition into high school. As examples, ever more difficult classes, the rollercoaster rides of romance and dating, the formation of cliques and social groups – all of which can evoke different doses of decreased Sense of Control and increased Novelty, Unpredictability, and Threat to the Ego/Self. Research has shown that increased stress in young adolescents can be related to decreased academic grades, attendance, and extra-circular activities. You can help your youngsters by not making rules that will prevent them from being exposed to stressors (this is simply not possible), but rather by sensitively breaking down and working through the stressors that affect them most.

deconstruct step-by-step the different components of a situation that may generate stress for them. As their problem-solving abilities evolve, you can assist them by helping them to recognize ways of thinking that permit effective coping to life's stressors.

Teenagers are intellectually able to apply **means-ends thinking** to deconstructing stress as well. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, that is, the skills we have acquired for resolving issues in a social context, are probably some of the most powerful methods for dampening the effects of stressful high-school drama. In the 1970s, Spivack & Shure described a method which they called **means-ends thinking**. The focus here is on reaching a social goal (e.g., "I want to join the school hockey team"), developing the means to this goal step-by-step ("I will

practice my slap shot"), identifying possible obstacles and draw backs ("I might not get accepted because I'm too young"), proposing alternatives when draw backs are found ("I'll join the neighborhood inter-mural hockey team in the meantime"), and finally monitoring the attainment of the directed goal ("I'll try every year until I get accepted"). Simpler said than done at times, but means-ends thinking is an effective way that we can psychologically make means justify the ends in the attainment of our goals using a cost-benefit approach that includes weighing the pros and cons of different courses of action. This can apply not only within the social realm and let us now consider how this might work in stressful situations involving NUTS characteristics specific to high school transitioning:

## ▲ Novelty: Physical Changes

High school is generally followed shortly by puberty – a period of dramatic shifts in height, weight, and body fat distribution, as well as maturation of reproductive organs and secondary sexual characteristics (i.e., body/facial hair and growth of breasts). This natural process can be quite scary at first and should be addressed in a manner whereby your adolescent understands how these changes will unfold and what they represent concerning sexual behaviors. Within a social context, youngsters can become quite self-conscious of where they fit within this biological marathon and may become distressed if they are too quick or too slow to join the body image race – incidentally, girls reach puberty on average two years before boys. While the goal or outcome in this situation is inevitable, a means-ends thinking method still applies as parents can explain the course puberty takes and treat its stages as different goals necessitating different actions (i.e., the presence of facial hair and the fatherly instructions for shaving it). Try to go further than just explaining what puberty brings about. Why not share what you felt at the time? Sometimes a good laugh can come out of it (which also reduces stress hormone levels) e.g. I thought I would never grow into my nose or I almost tripped on my dangling arms on many occasions. Look at me now!

## ▲ Unpredictability: Career Paths

Youngsters are bombarded at a young age by the question posed so often by adults: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Adolescence is no exception to this, except the





pressure is high now to actually choose a career path and fulfill the pre-requisite courses before CEGEP and college. This daunting future goal can be broken down based on small mental goals taken in a certain direction of interest combined with a process of elimination. A good place to start is to ask “what job do you think would make you happiest and what attributes do you have that would fit.” This is tricky since the “I don’t know” answer

### ▲ Threat to the Ego / Self: Peer Pressure

Adolescence is a time where experimentation with maladaptive behaviors (e.g., early or excessive drug and alcohol use, unprotected sex, etc.) becomes more likely. This is where peer support can become peer pressure. Keep in mind that social support is a powerful buffer against the effects of chronic stress, however, the role family and school personnel play in deterring maladaptive behaviors can be eclipsed by the persuasion of friends. Studies have suggested that the best approach for parents to take is to clearly state their position on these matters and encourage honest communication. This arena is challenging for parents as well as their curious teens, but bear in mind that your adolescent’s anxiety comes from multiple sources: The desire to fit within a peer network combined with punishment if caught or ridiculed if too chicken to try. This can be tremendously confusing and once again communication and understanding is key. It is in this realm that the means-ends thinking method was developed, since teens (and adults alike) do not always think through the consequences of their actions by

*Adolescence is a time where experimentation with maladaptive behaviors (e.g., early or excessive drug and alcohol use, unprotected sex, etc.) becomes more likely. This is where peer support can become peer pressure.*

be also having any academic difficulties. You obviously do not want to be a nag with your self-actualizing teen, but highlighting the importance of monitoring your time and using it maximally is a priceless lesson that may need to be repeated over and over again. Means-ends thinking is probably best designed to help out in this domain both personally and socially. When your adolescent has his or her first major project, it might be a good time to crib out this problem-solving skill.

*Try to go further than just explaining what puberty brings about why not share what you felt at the time sometimes a good laugh can come out of it (which also reduces stress hormone levels) e.g. I thought I would never grow into my nose or I almost tripped on my dangling arms on many occasions. Look at me know!*

is very likely, but it encourages a self-evaluation that goes hand-in-hand with a sense of purpose and predictability. We all have talents and skills that make us uniquely qualified for certain vocations versus others, and by forcing the contemplation of a working future, you are in fact slowly preparing for it.

Today much emphasis is placed on laying the groundwork for a successful career early on (perhaps too early), kids often know this when they **enter** high school even though they only really have to think about it later on in grades 10-11. Just take the pressure off. Reassure your child that no decision is set in stone there is ALWAYS a plan B (see *Mammoth* Volume 1) and that they need not worry about this at the beginning of high school. Instead get them excited about exploring new subjects and play up the fact that they are now mature enough to study these new topics.

breaking down the pros and cons. However, this can be done by helping your child answer specific questions about these behaviors such as: ‘What is my goal by doing this?’ ‘Why is this my goal?’ ‘Are there other goals that I could have that would bring me what I want to get from this situation?’ ‘If so, what would be the advantage of this approach?’ etc.

### ▼ Sense of Control: Time Management

The use of an agenda described previously is an excellent first step towards increasing one’s control over the flux of time. With ever more complicated classes and pesky responsibilities, the idea of effectively managing time becomes ever more important. While stress does not result from time pressure per se, a loss of control over one’s time certainly can induce stress. It can become easy to succumb to deadlines or miss out on opportunities, further cascading into increased stress should your teen

### Conclusion

The media often insinuates that the transition into high school and advent of adolescence is a time of “storm and stress.” This myth refers to the belief that this period is a time of familial deterioration and inter-generational conflict caused by raging hormones and maladaptive choices.

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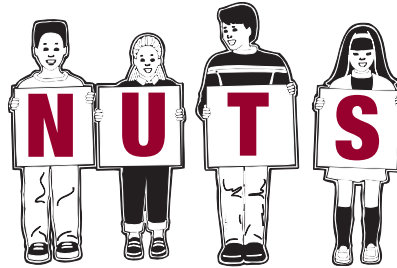
In fact, **studies suggest that the majority of teenagers in North America love and admire their parents, rely and value their beliefs/advice/experiences, and look forward to acquiring the skills and attitudes of adults.** Though this is naturally a time of rapid intellectual and physical change, adolescence is not synonymous with chaos or storms of stress.

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**Parents are instrumental in helping forecast brighter weather by helping map out stressful situations and their solutions.**

# How to Recognize Signs of Acute Stress in Children... and in Parents!

**T**he road to acute stress states is paved with diverse signs and symptoms. **Please keep in mind that many of these signs can be present with other kinds of physical or mental health problems. This list is by no means a diagnostic tool and is not meant to replace the opinion of a qualified physical or mental health professional if you are concerned about your child.** That being said, one or more of the following can be present when your child faces acute stress. These reactions are in fact quite normal. Problems arise, however, when stress exposure is chronic or long lasting, thus if you see your child is going NUTS over stress, then get them talking and exercising!



and their digestion is slowed, if stress responses occur often enough then the following may show up: Head aches, dizziness, back aches. There are several reasons for frequent headaches and dizziness like inadequate hydration, problems with sleep, frequent rises in blood pressure and drops in blood sugar if your child is not eating enough or often enough. Stress or tension headaches tend to result in the sense of pressure on both sides of the head and in the lower neck regions. We do not really notice it but when we are stressed we tend to tighten our muscles, after a while this tension builds up and a headache ensues.

**Frequent Tummy Aches** – Digestive difficulties (frequent burping, burning sensation, or heart burn and in the extreme, vomiting). Here the culprit is a slowing of digestion every time one has a stress response. If you observe that Sunday afternoons or evenings bring about tummy aches then start asking your child if everything is OK with school. The same goes if they show up towards the end of the school week. This is telling you that your child has mounted multiple stress responses.

**Choppy or breathless talking** – This is not because your child has just finished running a mad dash but rather due to the frequent rises in pulse and breathing rate that accompany a stress response. If your child is telling you about something that happened at school and they seem to be speaking breathlessly then here we know that adrenalin is a pumping!

**Being Sweaty** – Again, as it was the case for choppy breathing, this change will also be noted in the absence of physical activity. For instance, if your child is sweaty on the way to school or right after your child gets home. If they are sweaty ask if they were recently active, if they were not then once again their stress hormones are likely raging!

**Frequent Aches and Pains – Why:** Every time your child has a stress response their blood pressure rises, their muscles are tensed,

**Frequent Colds and Skin breakouts** – Every time we have a stress response the activity of our immune system (the bodily systems

that fights intruders like germs, viruses, and bacteria) is slowed or altered in some way. As much as it may be confusing, nature has a way of telling us something is wrong by bringing out the extremes. This is why sometimes too much or too little of something occurs. For instance, frequent colds can tell us that the immune system is not active enough, while frequent skin outbreaks like hives or eczema tells us that it is in over drive, both of which can result from stress.

**Problems with sleep** – Sleep disturbances are one of the most commonly reported stress-related symptoms. If your child is taking longer to get to sleep at night, wakes up frequently, or even seems to be sleeping all the time, stress can be behind such disturbances. Lying awake at night often results from one replaying events of the day or planning for tomorrow. Technically speaking, this can be called ruminating. An important thing to note about ruminating is that we more often than not release stress hormones while the stresses of the day are bouncing around in our head. This is everything but good because one is repeatedly activating the stress response system and keeping stress hormone levels high. Over time, these high levels can be detrimental to health. This is why it is good to take some time for one's self in a given day to work through (i.e. deconstruct and reconstruct) the situations that are making us NUTS with stress. If your child is in pre-school then you have to do the nut cracking for and with them!

## SNEAK PEAK....

- Who responds more to psychological stress, men or women and why?
- Who is most vulnerable to developing stress-related disorders men or women and why?

We will answer these questions and much more in our next issue of *Mammoth Magazine*!

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