

October 2011

# Kindred *Spirits*

## Help Children Learn to Cope with Stress

### Too much stress is overwhelming

#### Resilient Children

Ann Masten, professor at University of Minnesota and her colleagues found that resilient children have the following characteristics that help them bounce back in stressful situations.

- \* Loving and protective relationships.
- \* Effective problem solving.
- \* Ability to cope in positive ways.
- \* Belief in own effectiveness.
- \* Feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy.
- \* Ability to express feelings.
- \* Positive attitude and optimism.
- \* Connections to positive role models.

Published in partnership with the Family Friends Program, Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and LINC.

MU Extension contributors: Marsha Alexander, Dr. Nina Chen, Saralee Bury Jamieson, Glenda Kinder, Shatomi Luster, Susan Mills-Gray, Diana Milne, Tammy Roberts, and Lisa Wallace.

Stress is a natural response to change, demands, or pressures of life such as family changes, job changes, personal loss, illness, changes in life styles, etc. Stress can be good as well as bad.

Stress can boost our energy to enjoy life more. But too much stress can make us overwhelmed, unhappy, and cranky.

"No matter how old we are, everyone experiences stress. Children are not an exception. They have stress too," says Nina Chen, MU Extension human development specialist. They feel stress from time to time.

The sources of stress on children include going to day care or school for the first time, being away from home, constant changes in schools, neighborhoods, and child care arrangements, peer pressure, moving to new living environments, the birth of a sibling, birthday parties, vacation trips, dealing with strangers as an infant, fear of the dark, adjusting to a growing body during the preteen years, parent's divorce or separation, parents being called to war, parent's unemployment, family illness or death, family conflicts, violence in their homes and communities, natural disasters, etc.

Every child reacts to stress differently. Some children seem to be born with easy going personalities. Other children tend to be upset and be disrupted by new situations and challenges easily.

Although we cannot change their personalities, we can teach children ways of managing stress and reducing harmful stress. Here are some tips:

- ◆ Spend one-to-one time with your grandchildren each day.
- ◆ Keep communication lines open with your grandchildren.
- ◆ Set clear rules and consequences and have realistic expectations.
- ◆ Encourage grandchildren to talk about what is bothering them.
- ◆ Encourage healthy eating and physical activities.
- ◆ Help grandchildren have enough sleep.
- ◆ Identify the cause of the stress.
- ◆ Teach grandchildren how to relax, make decisions, and solve problems.
- ◆ Provide your grandchildren with a sense of security.
- ◆ Monitor your own stress levels. Be a role model for your grandchildren.

# Tips to Managing Halloween Candy

## Teach eating candy in moderation

Halloween treats show up in the stores late September. The first thing is to not fall into the marketing trap and get tempted to buy candy early.

According to Susan Mills-Gray, MU Extension nutrition and health specialist, “Parents should set expectations early regarding the big sugar holiday.”

She encourages parents to prepare their children the day before Halloween. Talk about how much fun it will be to go trick-or-treating but not so much fun for their body if

they eat a lot of candy. It is important for kids to learn that candy is a treat that should be eaten in small doses.

Determine a reasonable number of days to enjoy the candy. Most children will get much more candy than needed, even when they divide it up. You don’t want to teach your child to eat candy every day, since it is a once in a while treat.

Agree upon when the children can eat the candy. This helps your child learn that candy can be an occasional part of a healthy meal plan.

Discuss candy-eating rules with your child before they go out trick-or-treating. Children should not eat candy until they return home and you have inspected all the candy.

Using mini-sized bags, help your child pick and choose a couple of pieces of their favorite candy to place in each baggie. This helps them learn portion control, a very important part of healthy eating.

Store the extra baggies of candy in a cabinet out of reach. It is best not to store the candy in their room to help them avoid temptation.

### University of Missouri Extension

#### West Central Region

Bates County	660.679.4167
Cass County	816.380.8460
Clay County	816.407.3490
Henry County	660.885.5556
Jackson County	816.252.5051 816.482.5850
Johnson County	660.747.3193
Lafayette County	660.584.3658
Platte County	816.270.2141
Ray County	816.776.6961
St. Clair County	417.646.2419
Vernon County	417.448.2560

[extension.missouri.edu](http://extension.missouri.edu)

equal opportunity/ADA institution

## Kids and Sports

Fall is in full swing. The kids are back into their school Routines and activity schedules are packed for many Families—especially if you have a child involved in sports. Many kids, parents and grandparents plan their week around practice sessions and games.

Is it important to get boys and girls involved in sports? Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist says “Sports can help children learn to play in a structured way, to follow directions and develop skills through practicing. Sports can also help kids understand the importance of teamwork both on and off the field.”

There are some drawbacks to sports—especially when coaches or parents put the emphasis on “winning” rather than learning skills and practicing good sportsmanship. Some children lose their enthusiasm for sports at an early age because they get the message from adults that if you’re not a star player, then you are not a valued team member.

What kind of experience do you want for your child or grandchild? If a child is truly interested in playing sports, then make sure the sports program is operated in a way that enhances a child’s overall development, rather than simply putting all the focus on winning.