Let's talk about... Stress Awareness

We all know the, potentially, devastating effects that too much stress can have on our mental and physical health.

'National Stress Awareness Day' on Thursday 2nd November marks a reminder of the importance of managing our stress levels so that we can act before it becomes a problem.

In my work, I help children and young people understand the negative effects of stress using the analogy of a stress or worry bucket.

As children go about their day, they fill their bucket with different worries or negative thoughts. And just like any bucket, the more that goes in, the more the bucket overflows

When that worry bucket becomes too full, we see the effects of stress and this can manifest in all sorts of ways – from anger outbursts, irritability, poor sleep, to anxiety, or becoming more withdrawn.

Whilst our buckets are never completely empty, there are steps we can take to help prevent our children from filling their buckets and help combat the negative effects of stress:

1. Provide extra support and stability. This might involve being there to talk to your child or just listening – whatever feels right to them.
2. Support your child in developing good sleep hygiene. We all know a good night's sleep is great for our well-being but there are so many factors that can affect the quality of sleep we have. Encouraging your child to turn off all blue light devices at least an hour before bedtime can help to signal to our brain that it is time to relax.
3. Teach your child ways to cope. Remember, a little bit of short-term positive stress is good for us and enables us to learn coping strategies to deal with more challenging life events. Children are often faced with a little short-term positive stress when they are faced with responsibility. For example, this might include getting their bag ready for school or being responsible for feeding the pet in the morning.
4. Encourage your child to find relaxing activities they enjoy. Whether it's colouring, listening to music, reading a book, or having a bubjble bath, activities like these are great for building into your child's day.
5. Support your child to develop a more positive mindset. Have you ever had one of those days where from the moment you get out of bed everything seems to go wrong? When your child is having a day like this, help them to notice the good things in their day and spend a few minutes discussing 'what's been good?'
6. Be a positive role model. It is normal to feel stress from time to time, and as parents, this might be a feeling you are all too familiar with! Remember though, your child is looking to you to see how best to cope with things when their life feels stressful.

If stress is a concern for you or your child right now and you would like further information, tips and guidance, there is a wealth of information at:
https://www.stress.org.uk/
There are also further free parent resources available at:
https://www.theyouthfairy.com/the-parent-pad/

The Youth Fairy
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