



Stress soothers doctors swear by

Your child is feeling anxious, and of course you want to help her feel better. So we turned to doctors and asked what they “prescribe” when their own kids are sidelined by stress. Read on for their best drug-free remedies



A triple dose of this

“When my family relocated, my daughter had to make all new friends—she was so nervous,” recalls mother-of-two Laura Koniver, M.D., a general practitioner in North Charleston, South Carolina. She turned to probiotics to ease her daughter’s anxiety. The reason? “The gut and the brain constantly communicate and decreased gut flora has been shown to have an impact on things like anxiety and depression. Probiotics help bring the flora back,” explains Dr. Koniver. “The more variety you have in your probiotic colonies, the better, so I use different forms.” Each day, she gave her daughter 4 oz. of organic Greek yogurt and a Garden of Life Raw Probiotics Kids supplement (\$20 for 3.4 oz., Vitacost.com). “There’s a slight increase in benefit when probiotics are consumed with food, so I serve it with dinner,” says Dr. Koniver. She also gave her daughter a cup of fermented kombucha tea a few times a week. (If the taste is too strong, kid-friendly, probiotic-rich kefir also works.)

Magnesium this way

“My daughter gets anxiety about being on stage at school,” says Taz Bhatia, M.D., a mother of two and author of *The 21-Day Belly Fix*. “She’s a classic over-thinker, which hinders her sleep at these times.” To ease her daughter’s stress, Dr. Bhatia rubs magnesium oil on her daughter’s feet and neck (spots that are affected by stress) at bedtime. “Magnesium oil absorbs through the skin to decrease muscle tension and improve the metabolism of serotonin, which helps relieve anxiety,” explains Dr. Bhatia. In the morning, she dabs calming lavender oil on her daughter’s pulse points. “I use just a few dabs,” she says. “Not enough to make her sleepy. Just enough to travel to the limbic system and relax the brain.”

quick take

Where children feel safest and happiest



SOURCE: ChildFund Alliance

A 5-minute breathing break

“When any one of my four boys gets stressed out over a test and can’t sleep, I remind him about guided relaxation,” says Deborah Gilboa, M.D., a family doctor in Pittsburgh and author of *Get the Behavior You Want... Without Being the Parent You Hate!* “I instruct him to lie comfortably on his back. Next, I tell him, ‘Squeeze all the muscles in your feet as tight as you can to the count of 10. Now relax your feet for the count of 5. Deep breath in and out. This time, squeeze your calves as tight as you can and hold to the count of 10. Relax. Deep breath in and out.’” Dr. Gilboa repeats the calming practice until the entire body is relaxed. “This technique has never failed us,” she says. “It’s a great noninvasive way to help my kids stop focusing on their stress.” ❀

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