






Supporting Your Child in Times of Uncertainty: Immigrant Caregiver Resource for Teens (11-18 Years)

The world may feel uncertain right now, and if you are an immigrant caregiver, that stress might feel even heavier. Times of stress and uncertainty impact many parts of our lives: personal safety, financial stress, access to important resources, and our physical and mental health. This stress puts added pressure on families to find new ways to cope and survive. This resource provides practical strategies to help you support your own well-being while also supporting the well-being of the children in your life.

Taking Care of You, the Caregiver

Common Caregiver Experiences: It's natural for caregivers to put children first, but caring for our own physical and emotional health is essential to consistently give them and our loved ones the stable, supportive care they need. Below are some common reactions that caregivers may experience during times of stress. If any of these symptoms continue or worsen, contact your Primary Care Provider or a Mental Health Provider.




 THINKING	 FEELING	 DOING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling anxious, overwhelmed or like you have too much to do • Feeling emotionally tired and drained • Having trouble concentrating or making decisions • Worrying a lot about the future or loved ones • Feeling guilty or like you're not doing enough • Family relationships feel hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling lonely or cut off from others • Emotionally exhausted from caregiving • Finding it hard to ask for help or share how you feel • Stress leading to arguments or tension at home • Feeling distant from your usual support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble sleeping or not feeling rested • Turning to food or other habits to cope • Feeling unmotivated or low on energy • Using alcohol, caffeine, or other substances more often • Losing interest in hobbies or things you enjoy • Avoiding social events or support groups

Caregiver support recommendations when you are stressed and feeling uncertain about the future: As a caregiver, taking care of your own well-being is essential to supporting both yourself and the individuals you care for. Here are some strategies to manage and reduce these symptoms:

1. **Ask for help:** Lean on family, friends, or support groups to share caregiving duties.
2. **Stay connected:** A quick chat or visit with a friend can help you feel less alone.
3. **Keep a routine:** Prioritize exercise, healthy meals, and sleep to stay balanced.
4. **Take a break from the news:** Too much negative news can be stressful, so step away when needed.
5. **Be kind to yourself:** Caregiving is tough, no one is perfect.

Taking Care of Your Teen

Common experiences among teens who are feeling stressed and uncertain: It's important to note that each child is different, and some may display only one or two of these symptoms while others may show more. Parents and caregivers should watch for any noticeable changes in behavior or physical health, as these can be signs that a child is struggling with stress and uncertainty. If the symptoms persist or intensify, it can be helpful to seek support from a professional, such as a counselor or a pediatrician.

	Common Reactions	Support Recommendations	
 PHYSICAL	Headaches/Migraines	Can result from stress, tension, or too much screen time.	Limit screen time, stay hydrated, and use simple relaxation (deep breathing).
	Sleep Issues	Trouble falling asleep, frequent waking, or sleeping excessively due to stress.	Maintain a set bedtime, avoid screens before sleep, and try calming routines (reading, soft music).
	Fatigue	Feeling tired all the time, even with enough rest.	Encourage breaks and open talks about stress or worries.
	Appetite Changes	Stress may cause overeating or loss of appetite.	Keep mealtimes regular and note any big shifts in eating habits.
	Digestive Problems	Stomachaches, nausea, or bowel changes with no clear medical cause.	Identify stress or food triggers and stay hydrated.
	Skin Issues	Acne and other skin conditions can worsen under stress.	Suggest gentle skincare and reduce stress.
 BEHAVIORAL	Muscle Pain or Tension	Stress can tighten muscles, causing aches in the neck, back, or elsewhere.	Try stretching, light exercise, warmth (baths or heat packs), and quick relaxation methods such as breathing.
	Lower Performance at School or Work	Difficulty focusing, procrastination, or avoiding tasks.	Break tasks into small steps, celebrate progress, and check for stress or anxiety.
	Increased Substance Use	Turning to alcohol, drugs, or tobacco to cope.	Have open, calm conversations about risks, suggest healthier coping (exercise, hobbies), and consider professional help if needed.
	Social Withdrawal	Avoiding friends, family, or group activities.	Encourage low-pressure social activities and reassure them you're there to listen without judgment.
	Risky Behaviors	Acting impulsively (reckless driving, unsafe sexual choices) to escape stress.	Talk about potential consequences, guide better choices, and offer safe alternatives to channel stress.
	Changed Communication	Being secretive, avoiding conversations, or becoming irritable.	Stay calm, avoid lecturing, and listen actively when they do want to talk.
 EMOTIONAL	Excessive Screen Time	Overusing technology or social media as a distraction, which can worsen stress.	Set device rules, include screen-free times, and suggest other ways to relax.
	Neglecting Responsibilities	Skipping chores, schoolwork, or other obligations due to feeling overwhelmed.	Create a simple routine, break tasks into smaller steps, and support or reward follow-through.
	Low Self-Esteem	Feeling inadequate, self-doubting, or engaging in negative self-talk, often intensified by comparing themselves to peers.	Praise their efforts, highlight their strengths, and gently guide them to use positive self-talk instead of comparing themselves to others.
	Sensitivity to Rejection or Peer Pressure	Experiencing strong distress over social rejection or the need to fit in.	Validate their feelings, remind them it's okay to say "no," and reassure them they don't have to fit in to be valued.
	Depression or Hopelessness	Losing interest in favorite activities, showing persistent sadness, or expressing hopelessness.	Check in often, listen without judgment, and encourage small steps toward enjoyable activities. Seek professional help if sadness continues.

Resources for additional support for you and your child:

- **988 Mental Health Lifeline:** Call or text 988 for immediate support and crisis intervention (<https://988lifeline.org>)
- **ParentsHelpingParents:** Parents helpline and other parenting resources (<https://parentshelpingparents.org/>)
- **UnitedWeDream:** List of free or low-cost mental health services for undocumented immigrants (<https://unitedwedream.org/our-work/undocuhealth-wellness/>)