

# Effects of transition on child stress



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Using evidence, write an essay showing how stress is influenced at the levels of the individual, family, locality and society. Chose one intervention at one of the levels and say why you think it could be effective in tackling the problem.

This essay looks at how stress is influenced at many levels: individual, family, locality and society, and concentrates on the level of family, to describe an intervention that could be effective in tackling the problem. As Finlay *et al.* (2005; p. 141), stress is something that everybody experiences at some point in their life, from children to adults, although excessive amounts of stress can be harmful for individuals in terms of their health and longevity. It is therefore important that the causes of long-term stress be identified and that interventions are utilized in order to minimize the adverse effects of this stress. As Finlay *et al.* (2005; p. 29-31) point out, however, stress can have many causes, from individual factors, to family concerns, to external factors from the individual's environment (locality) to societal-level factors, all of which can lead to an individual experiencing stress. This can make it difficult to isolate one intervention that could be effective; the remainder of the essay will, however, describe a case study and will highlight one intervention that might be effective in this case.

The particular example that will be used is that of a primary-aged child who is showing signs of stress. The child is manifesting behavioural changes, such as disturbed sleep and mood swings, and is experiencing headaches and loss of appetite, all of which are classic signs of childhood stress (Flinn, 1999). The child is the youngest child of a two-child family, and has just started primary school. His parents both work full-time and they are rarely in

the house. The family does not eat together. The child's older brother is a teenager, and is going through exams at the moment. He himself is also showing signs of stress, and all the spare time the parents have, they spend with their oldest child, helping him cope with his exams. It is clear that the youngest child is being neglected emotionally, at a time when he needs support, having just moved to full-time school. There are many stressors on this child, which can be addressed through some simple interventions, which will be discussed below.

A recent study (Turner-Cobb, 2008) shows that, in particular, periods of transition in childhood can be extremely stressful for children. Studies have suggested that stress can be anticipated by children, which can lead to deep anxiety (Primary Report, 2007). As shown by Flinn (1999), untreated stress in childhood can have long-term health effects, such as adverse developmental effects (McEwen, 2008) and increased mortality (McEwen, 2003). In addition, childhood stress can lead to social problems, such as poor familial relationships, and behavioural disorders as a result of this (McEwen, 2003; Alfven *et al.*, 2008; Flinn, 1995). As Flinn and England (1997) show, supported by Bauer and Boyce (2004), these social problems can then lead, in later life, to socio-economic problems caused by long-term health concerns.

As (Finlay *et al.*, 2005; p. 64) state, “ Family relationships have both a positive and a negative effect on health behaviours and health”. As suggested, the lack of ‘ family meals’, where the whole family sits down to eat can disrupt the parent-children relationship, and can lead to stress being put on the children, who feel they do not have a regular point of contact with

their parent(s), breaking the facility for communication with their parent(s) (Finlay *et al.*, 2005; p. 64). This certainly seems to be the case here, where the parents work full-time and have little spare time to spend ‘quality time’ with their child. As (Finlay *et al.*, 2005; p. 70) suggest, the changing roles within families have put stress on the family, with both parents working meaning that the children are less likely to see their parents for extended periods of time, leading to a greater need for independence at an earlier age and, also, potentially leading to poor health behaviours in the children and to higher levels of stress in these children.

What can be done, what intervention can be suggested, to help this child? Given that the child is young, very young, and is going through a stressful period in his life at the moment, with the transition to full-time school, and that the child is being neglected, emotionally, by his parents, the suggested intervention is that the family attempt to sit down together at all mealtimes. This would give the family an opportunity to be together and would allow the child time to settle down with his parents and to feel comfortable enough to be able to tell them about his worries and his concerns. As shown by Arnold (1990), it is often enough for a child to be given the space to talk for the child to feel less stressed, and to recover from the symptoms of stress they were suffering.

This intervention is expected to be effective in that it would allow connections to be made again between the child and his parents, and his brother, allowing some repair of the disrupted parent-child relationship (Finlay *et al.*, 2005; p. 64). The need for families to have a space (both physical and temporal) where they can be together is paramount, in terms of <https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-transition-on-child-stress/>

allowing each family member to interact with each other, allowing them to discuss their worries and concerns and allowing, to some extent, the stressors to be relaxed. This is especially important for a young child who needs to feel protected. Without the protection of their families, their parents, young children can begin to feel vulnerable, with this vulnerability allowing for stressful events to have a far greater negative effect than usual on their responses to stress (Arnold, 1990). By sitting down together as a family, by talking and *being listened to*, the child can externalize his worries and, once shared, these worries can be dealt with in the most appropriate ways. Indeed, recent studies have shown that families who eat meals together have children who are more emotionally healthy than those families who do not eat together (Fivush and Duke, 2005; Duke *et al.*, 2004).

In summary, the suggested intervention in this case is to sit down together, as a family, to eat together. It is important to realize that such an intervention can have major effects on the sense of belonging a child has, which, in turn, can reduce their sense of vulnerability and can increase their ability to deal with stressful situations, and to avoid suffering from stress. This type of interaction can also lead to greater levels of family cohesiveness and resilience, having the beneficial side effect of contributing to a general reduction in family-level stressors.

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