

# The Wellness Exchange



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## Is Your Clutter Taking Over?

Free yourself from physical and mental clutter

*For many of us, the mention of clutter gives an immediate image of junk or “stuff” that is all mixed up and out of place. Although valid, this illustration is not complete, as it depicts only the physical side of clutter. There are also clutter intangibles: stuff that overwhelms your mind, weighs down your heart, and suffocates your spirit.*

*No matter what forces are dragging you down, you can dramatically improve your focus and productivity, both personally and professionally, by eliminating your clutter.*

### Physical & Mental Clutter

**Physical Clutter** - This may be the stack of papers on your desk, mail on your kitchen table, or the stack of toiletries under your bathroom sink. It also includes all of the “I’ll use it one day” items. Reducing or eliminating physical clutter can also decrease mental clutter.

**Mental Clutter** - These are the thoughts that continually run through your mind. There are things to remember (to-do lists) and things to forget (worries). Letting go of mental clutter gives you room for creative thinking—and peace of mind.

If you have physical clutter, it is likely you have emotional or mental clutter as well. Over time, clutter can result in decreased work capacity, strained relationships, and constant feelings of being overwhelmed. Reducing your clutter can provide you with a sense of control, more time and energy, and the desire to be more focused and productive.

***If you keep remembering the stuff you should forget, you’ll keep forgetting the stuff you want to remember.***

### Clutter Is...

#### Unrelated Things Mixed Together

Clutter is not one project all spread out; it’s when you get unrelated projects mixed together - or various thoughts muddled together.

#### Things You Neither Need Nor Want

Think of the 80/20 rule: You wear 20% of your clothes 80% of the time. 80% of your income comes from 20% of your clients. It is likely that 80% of the papers you file, you will never need to look at again.

#### Unfinished Things Left Out

How many times have you said to yourself, “I’m leaving it out to remind myself?” Leaving things out may alert you to what needs to be done, but it also distracts you from what you’re doing at the moment.

#### Postponed Decisions

Instead of putting it to the side; each time you have the opportunity to make a decision, make it.

### The Problem With Clutter

Clutter zaps your time, drains your energy, prevents you from being your best, and causes stress. It occupies space, both physical and mental. It impedes movement and progress, and it detracts from efficiency and effectiveness at home and work.

Just think... do you avoid having company over because your home is not in order? Have you put off planning a vacation or starting a business venture because your life feels out of control? Or does the clutter in your home or office make you feel tired, overwhelmed, or irritable? If so, your clutter may be controlling your life.

### Releasing Your Clutter

Getting rid of clutter is not about cleaning. It is about increasing focus and decreasing interference. Since clutter can be physical and mental, it’s best to use these strategies in both arenas.

#### (1) Acknowledge the clutter

Get an understanding of what clutter is and that it exists. This means that you must be willing to take a good hard look at your surroundings and habitual thinking.

#### (2) Know what is important

It’s hard to decide what to get rid of if you don’t know what is important to you in the first place. A strategic plan is needed. Anything is potentially important without a plan.

#### (3) Group related items and thoughts

Doing so gives you an overview. Merge those “things I gotta do” with the million dollar ideas you’ve scribbled on napkins into one master list. It’s only by seeing it all together that you can begin to appropriately prioritize.

#### (4) Get rid of the excess

Divide piles into three categories: **Keep / Maybe / Pitch**. Immediately get rid of **Pitch** items. At your next uncluttering session, divide again and get rid of the **Pitch** pile.

Don’t forget to also do a mental purge while you’re uncluttering. Write things down instead of trying to memorize them. Be sure to get rid of the “what ifs” and “shoulds.” When you catch yourself thinking, “But I might need that someday,” refer back to your statement of what’s important.

#### (5) Attend to the avoided tasks

Take action on those nagging tasks that you have been intending to do, but never get around to do. Attending to your tasks will purge the physical and mental clutter of unfinished business. You will be healthier and happier for it.

***“I never bother to memorize anything that I can easily look up”***  
- Albert Einstein



# Stress in Children:

## *Symptoms and Solutions*



*Contrary to what many parents may think; being a child today isn't easy. Though many well-meaning parents strive to involve their children in a variety of activities, they may unknowingly be overwhelming their children. Children's lives are more complicated than they may seem, so here are some tips for reducing stress symptoms and alleviating any unnecessary anxiety.*

### What Could Cause This Stress?

Compared to the headache of work, parenting, and relationships, your children's issues may seem minor to you, but remember they view them as very important. Children may have to deal with family conflict, divorce, peer pressure, violence at home or school, and changes in neighborhoods, schools and childcare arrangements.



### Physical Symptoms

Just like adults, children may find their lives overwhelming. Yet, unlike adults, they may not be able to verbalize their feelings. Instead, they may let you know they have anxiety or depression by complaining about a headache, stomach ache, fatigue, trouble sleeping, or loss of appetite. These complaints could be initial indicators of more serious stress-related maladies such as asthma, hay fever, and migraines, or stomach illnesses.

**Tip: Give your children a chance to solve their own problems. Discuss solutions and help them along the way. However, make sure they are the ones taking action.**

### Behavioral Symptoms

Along with physical symptoms, many children also exhibit stress-related behavioral symptoms. They may cry, talk back, or become aggressive, irritable, nervous, or panic stricken. If you notice any physical or behavioral changes in your child, you may want to identify the stressors and work on lessening them.

### Make Life Easier for Your Child

Here are some things parents can do to ease their child's stress:

**Help your children talk about what is bothering them.** Offer opportunities for your child to talk. Instead of asking, "What's wrong?" ask questions such as, "How are things going at school with your teacher?" Be careful to not criticize what your children say or they will learn not to tell you things that bother them.

**Teach relaxation skills.** Show your children how to relax by remembering and imagining pleasant situations like a favorite vacation or happy experience.

**Encourage vigorous physical activities.** Exercise releases energy and promotes relaxation. Try family activities like bike riding, hiking, or swimming.

**Encourage healthy eating.** Teach your children by words and examples that eating a healthy diet allows their bodies to handle stress better.

**Encourage children to welcome change, not to fear it.** Let them know change is part of life and it can be exciting, too.

**Teach ways of handling difficult situations.** Talk through and role play with your children how they can handle a stressful situation.

**Praise and encourage efforts, but don't expect perfection.** Your children want to please you, but pushing them too hard could be detrimental. Support them in their endeavors and encourage excellence, but be careful not to press them for flawless grades or sports performances.

**Teach your children that mistakes are OK.** Let them know that all people, including you, make mistakes. Mistakes provide an opportunity for growth and learning.

**Encourage your children to have friendships.** Friendships improve self-esteem. Facilitate play dates and support your children's efforts to make new friends.

**Monitor your personal stress levels.** Children take cues from their parents. If you react negatively to stressful situations, your children may too. Marital disputes are particularly disturbing to children, try not to argue with your spouse in front of your children.

**Be a role model.** Handle your own stress in a healthy way. If your children see you talking to others about problems, taking time to relax, and living a healthy lifestyle, you become their best example.