



Settling in Canada can be stressful. What's more, if your family had a long journey to safety, it's common to still feel fearful. However, this can lead your child to feeling fearful, too—and that can result in stress. In this tip sheet, you'll learn how to recognize the signs of stress in your child. Once you know what to look for, you can work as a family to find ways to begin to feel safe again.

Is your child suffering from stress?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, your child might be suffering from stress.

SLEEP

- Have there been changes in your child's sleep patterns? Are they having a hard time getting to sleep or staying asleep?
- Do they seem too quiet, too sleepy or “dull”?

EATING

- Have they been eating less than normal?
- Have they been eating more than normal? Are they always hungry? Have they been hoarding food?

BEHAVIOUR

- Are they fussy, crying more or harder to soothe?
- Do they react strongly to loud noises?
- Are they scared to be alone? Do they always want to be held by a parent or sibling?
- Do they refuse to be left with other familiar adults?
- Do they talk about scary events?
- Do they run, hide, fight and yell?

FEELINGS

- Are they fearful, angry, sad or withdrawn?
- Do they overreact?
- Is it hard to help your child calm down?

How can you help your child to feel safer and happier?

- 1. Create and stick to predictable routines.** Your baby or child may have experienced too much chaos and too many changes. Having a routine will help them begin to feel safer.
- 2. Make time for family meals.** If possible, have everyone eat together, and let this be a positive and enjoyable time. Children eat better when they are relaxed and happy.
- 3. Play with your child.** Nothing helps your child to recover from stress better than play! Get down on the floor, face to face. Have fun together! Watch for each new thing your child has learned and celebrate it. Playing outdoors is also a great way to reduce stress. You can also play with other children at the park or at group activities. Seeing other children happy and feeling safe will help your child to feel the same way.
- 4. Soothe your child before correcting them.** Sometimes, stress behavior looks like misbehavior. And children don't think or talk very well when they are upset. If your child is upset, help them to calm down before correcting their behaviour. Hold them, rock them, sing to them or talk quietly in your home language. Then talk about feelings and better behaviour.
- 5. Talk about scary memories.** If your child wants to talk about scary or sad things that happened, listen calmly. If you were sad or scared then too, it's okay to tell your child that. If you feel sad about it now, it's okay to say so too. Help your child know that the feelings will heal just like cuts and bruises do, but that it takes time.
- 6. Look after yourself.** If you are stressed, your child will feel stressed. This is especially true for babies and young children who see and feel the world through their parents. Make sure you eat well, sleep well and enjoy some small part of each day. Share what you enjoy with your child.

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