

How adolescent girls manage stress

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Greater influence over everyday life, emotional support, and cultural and recreational activities help to enable teenage girls to withstand stress. Those were the results of a dissertation from the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Stress and worry amongst teenagers have increased markedly in recent years, especially amongst [girls](#). According to recent statistics from the WHO, as many as seven out of ten teenage girls suffer from [stress](#).

"We must gain a deeper understanding of, and acquire more knowledge about, the underlying social processes that trigger the daily stress experienced by teenage girls," says public health researcher Katarina Haraldsson, the author of the dissertation.

In-depth interviews with girls in upper [secondary school](#) reveal a complex picture of teenage girls often voluntarily taking responsibility for many different issues and situations that concern school, home and leisure.

"Many people believe that the stress experienced by upper secondary school girls relates only to school. However, the picture is far broader. Girls feel responsibility for various types of relationships, such as with friends and siblings, or have taken upon themselves [leisure time](#) commitments in various associations and organisations", says Katarina Haraldsson.

The dissertation shows that stress arises at the interface between

responsibility and how one is encountered. A situation where a girl is not encountered with respect, for example, can lead to what was initially voluntarily accepted responsibility instead becoming perceived as something forced. The way people in a girl's surroundings encounter her is important not only in the context of each matter, but also for a girl's entire life situation.

There are several different sources of strength that the girls need to enable them to withstand the stress. These include having a greater say in one's own everyday life and getting [emotional support](#). Recreational and cultural activities were also found to be important sources of strength.

"It's important for us to consider what the girls themselves think is important to enable them to withstand stress. This will allow us to create better health-promoting and stress-preventing measures based on the girls' own situations," says Katarina Haraldsson.

The girls interviewed were motivated to learn more about stress in school, and also expressed a desire for scheduling in massage and yoga, as well as having more physical activities in order to promote recovery. The dissertation also shows that these kinds of measures help. A health-promoting programme with massage and mental exercise at a lower secondary school reduced the development of stress, especially amongst the girls.

"It is now crucial to spread these new insights about how young girls can withstand stress and instead promote well-being, to everyone who encounters young people in their everyday lives, and to put this knowledge to practical use," says Katarina Haraldsson.

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

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