

Ty'Ann Brown, 18, and mom, Beverly Britton.

The personal **stress you feel** in your

with stress—and even thrive on it—and those who suffer? The crucial distinctions seem to be good self-esteem, a strong belief in one's ability to cope, and emotional support from family

ing with you, be available for her anyway. Use drive time as talk time; some teenagers communicate best in the car, finding these talks less threatening than discussions at home. Make an effort to attend school plays, games, concerts and other events that are important to her. Inquire about her interests and hobbies.

“My mother and I share a strong religious faith, and I've learned to rely on prayer when I feel stressed or upset.”

Take care of yourself. Finding a variety of ways to reduce your own stress levels—say, an

and friends. Here's how to help: **Establish a bond.** According to studies at Northern Illinois University and the University of Georgia, parental understanding and support go a long way toward helping adolescents feel protected.

evening walk, meditation, listening to music—helps prevent your anxieties from rubbing off on your teenager, and models good stress management.

▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶ From page 44
we're all entitled to have a bad day. But somehow, I never feel quite as entitled.”

How Parents Can Help

Not all stress is negative, say experts. It's an inevitable part of life that can be energizing and motivating, and that can actually help teenagers handle the transition to competent and healthy adulthood. What makes the difference between kids who cope well

“My mother and I can talk about anything,” says Ty'Ann. “We share a strong religious faith, and she taught me to pray when I'm feeling upset. That makes such a difference—sharing, talking and praying together.”

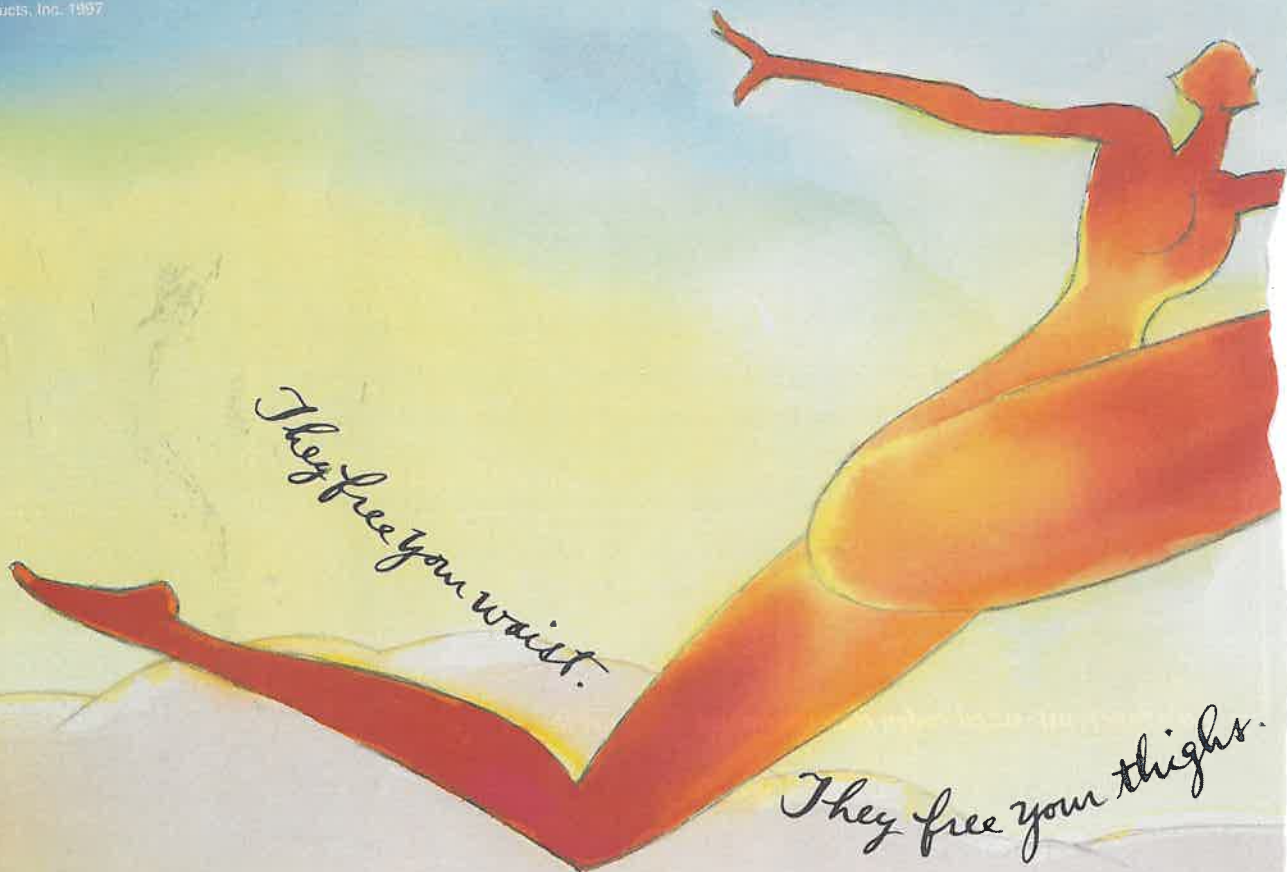
If your child, like most teens, prefers hanging out with friends to be-

“I wish I could handle things the way my mother does,” says Angie Arellano, 18, of Athens, Alabama. “When she's stressed, she stays calm. Me? I yell and throw stuff.”

To help Angie develop a better coping style, her mom, Marci, brainstorm alternatives with her. “We talk about how she can manage her temper by taking a deep breath and thinking before she speaks.”

Linda Harris

© Leggs Products, Inc. 1997



own life also plays a role in your **teenager's well-being.**

Validate your teen's pain. If your son or daughter complains about stomach-aches or headaches, take it seriously—these could be physical symptoms of stress. Pay a visit to the doctor to rule out a medical condition.

Support your child's friendships. Close connections with kids her own age are a great stress-protector because friends act as a sounding board. Get to know her different pals and

strongly encourage the best of these relationships. "Friends can be with Angie and offer her support when I can't," points out Marci Arellano.

Give the security of limits. Though they may complain about rules, limits can be a comfort to teens. Your child may be secretly relieved when you say no. "My parents won't let me" is a less embarrassing excuse for kids to give peers than "I don't want to."

Laying out rules helps kids avoid situations they may not be able to handle. **Help your child feel competent.** A sense of empowerment can help a teen withstand pressure. Reassure her even as you correct her, and when she does well, praise the effort as well as the result. ■

Is Your Teen Stressed Out?

Not all kids are able to express their feelings in words, but their physical reactions and certain types of behavior can offer important clues.

● **Headaches** Can include migraines and tension headaches, either during stressful events or afterward.

● **Gastrointestinal distress** Nausea, stomach-aches and diarrhea can

all be signs of stress and are common in kids.

● **Eating disorders** Can include overeating, bulimia or anorexia. While most common among teen girls, anorexia and bulimia often surface in boys who are under pressure to keep their weight low for sports like wrestling.

● **Avoidant behavior** Some teens express

anxiety and overload by becoming less social and more prone to crying and procrastination. The teen who dawdles over a term paper, for instance, may be an anxiety-prone perfectionist who needs help learning to break down tasks and give himself permission to be less than perfect.

When to Seek Professional Help

Experts agree that there is a definite link between stress and depression in teens. If your child exhibits signs of depression for more than two weeks—withdrawal from friends and family, irritability, sudden change in appetite or sleep patterns—take note. Depression can lead to risk taking, substance abuse or thoughts of suicide—all red flags that your teenager may need professional help, either one-on-one or with the family. A therapist can help your child sort out problems and find new ways to cope. It doesn't have to be expensive. Many clinics offer sliding-scale fees.

Guess what they do for your mind.

They free your knees.



*L'eggs latest ~ Sheer Comfort.
Nothing beats a great pair of L'eggs.®*