



Ep. 37 Stressed Out Kids - Madiha Saeed, MD

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 0:00

Hello and welcome to the FIX YOUR FATIGUE podcast. Whether you can't get out of bed in the morning, your energy crashes throughout the day, or you're a biohacker looking to optimize your energy, productivity and focus. This podcast is for you. I am Dr. Evan Hirsch. And I will be your host on your journey to resolving fatigue and optimizing your energy. And we'll be interviewing some of the top leaders in the world on fatigue resolution. Welcome. Hey, everybody, welcome back to the fixer fatigue Podcast. I'm so glad that you're joining me here today, because we're gonna be talking about a very important topic stress in kids with my good friend, Dr. Madiha Saeed. So let's learn a little bit about her. So Dr. Saeed, also known as holistic mom MD on social media, is a practicing board certified family physician in the USA health influencer, international speaker and author of the holistic RX Your Guide to healing chronic inflammation and disease and the Children's functional medicine book series Adam's healing adventures, and two other international books and she's working to empower the world towards healthier living. Her current online platforms reach millions of people. She's the director of education for documenting hope, and now we will, she sits on multiple medical advisory boards including wellness mama Dr. Sade and her Oh, including wellness mama, Dr. Sade and her children speak internationally at the most prestigious holistic conferences, summits, radio podcasts, including Mind Body green newspapers, and the United Nations recently published her paper on religion and the food system. She is a regular on the International Emmy winning medical talk show The Dr. Nandi show, and Dr. Seeds, children hosts the holistic kids show which I've been on their podcast, interviewing the biggest names in the functional, holistic and integrative medicine world and helping kids empower and educate other kids. Dr. Saeed, thank you so much for joining me today.

Madiha Saeed, MD 2:08

Oh my gosh, just my incredible honor. I'm so honored to be here. Thank you so much for having me, of

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 2:14

course. So let's talk about stressing kids. So why is this important?

Madiha Saeed, MD 2:23

Stress, right. We are overworked pandemic fears, politics, social media, the kids I literally growing up in a world filled with negativity and stress. And stress actually leads to 80% or even more of chronic health conditions that come to primary care physicians like us. So I mean, a recent study found that 1 million children reported that those that suffered from you know, social, either financial poverty or long term unemployment in the families dress, like from even losing a loved one a divorce and alcohol abuse and childhood increase the risk of premature death in early childhood. Well, isn't that crazy? That's crazy, just because if you have stress that actually increases your risk of premature death in early childhood, I mean, from wages from 16 to 36 years of age. So stress really does have a toll on both our chip on our child's brain and body, and adults brain and body and really influencing them all throughout life. Because you know, specifically with I mean, looking at the world that our kids are living in today, it activates these panics and systems and a child's brain that can really lead to this over active stress response systems that impacts their spiritual, mental, physical and emotional well being.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 3:59

So it sounds like we're talking about ACEs, adverse childhood experiences, all of those, right?

Madiha Saeed, MD 4:05

Because, I mean, I mean, I have these traumas that could occur, or just even just watching the news. I mean, just look what the kids are watching on a constant daily basis and the news or social media all about fear, oh my gosh, you're gonna die, oh my god to get this done, or the us versus them or, you know, all of these problems, you know, and even you can you can even start seeing this the signs of stress. Even though signs of stress is really different in your child, depending on the age, if it's a teen or child, you know, preschoolers have, like nightmares and lose weight and can have loss of appetite and fear of being separated elementary schools have other issues. So it's not just the trauma, but it's I think, just the world that we're constantly living in the negativity that is really leading to problems. Today,

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 5:01

I can totally see that and so we talking about mental, emotional, physical stressors, all the above

Madiha Saeed, MD 5:09

all of the above. Because what happens in stress, let's go let's dive in a bit more about stress. So the stress response occurs when the body feels threatened. So anytime a body feels threatened, so that's known as like the fight and flight mechanism. And when the when the amygdala senses a threat, the hippocampus that links the fear response to the context in which the the threatening stimulus or event has occurred, it then sends a signals to the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland and activates the stress pathways and impairs the prefrontal cortex. So that stressor can be anything, right. And that this response can be really life saving in an emergency situation. But when you're when you really well, you need to act immediately. Like if there's a you know, Tiger saber toothed Tiger chasing you. But with this is the thing though, but when we because of we're constantly on this hamster wheel bombarded all day long, go go, go go go with little downtime. It feels like we're that really we're being chased by that tiger all day long. So it's really an it does, it has a huge effect on your child and adult. As we said, 80% of the complaints that come to primary care physicians are due to these issues. But I don't know about you, and how much stress management is you learned in medical school or residency,

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 6:33

or in childhood, right?

Madiha Saeed, MD 6:37

Very limited. And so this is why it's so important to bring this to light, because the effects of stress are really in the stresses influencing our child's bodies, their brain, their behaviors, and any stressful events. So by trigger can trigger emotional and even physical reactions on your child, and then makes them more prone to different health conditions, including heart attacks, obesity, diabetes, and cancers and even strokes. So really important to deal with this.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 7:07

Yeah, I'm so glad that you're talking about this today. Because, you know, one of the things that we see in chronic fatigue, chronic fatigue syndrome, myalgic, encephalitis, and even long hollers now is that there is a big component of aces, there are some adverse childhood events, right. And we know that the more adverse childhood events that somebody has, or adverse life events that make them feel like their life is not safe. And that there is there is something to be afraid of, the more likely they are to have chronic fatigue or a number of these other illnesses that you're talking about. So such an important point, and they need to children our future, I think there's a song about that, right?

Madiha Saeed, MD 7:48

Absolutely. And what's sad is that more and more children today are dealing with these aces. Right? More and more children. So it's really important to talk about this now more than ever, because that if more and more children, especially with around one in five report, having witnessed violence in their homes, you know, in their lifetime, one in four have reported you know, experiencing caregiver violence, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, and abduction, more than two thirds of children report at least one traumatic event by the age of 16. Now those can be you know, like anything loss of a loved one neglect accidents. But I mean, two thirds of children. That's craziness, right? And then, but then, so that's just the aces. But what about like, you know, like just being overbooked schedules, right, because now we're putting kids trying to juggle like sports and school. And I think we're overworking our children, like, from school, that we got to do all of these other things. And again, putting them on the same hamster wheel that we're used to be on. And so that's like all children. So it's, again, really important to talk about this issue.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 9:08

Yeah, it's huge. And that's part of the part of my story is that, you know, I basically pushed myself into fatigue, right? And so many adults do this as well. And so how do we, we need to change the way that we are in order to change the way that we're treating our kids, right? Because if we're pressing them into getting into the best Ivy League school, because we think that that's gonna make them happy, I guess and so what should we really be thinking about when we are scheduling our kids? Like, is there an overarching theme that we should be looking at like, is it happiness like how do I make my kid most well adjusted smartest make them the most money growing up happiest, like what should we looking at?

Madiha Saeed, MD 9:51

So I think that's every individual child can handle so much right and that it's really individualized plan that you a parent needs to sit down with their child and come up with that plan together. And what they want to do sure that they don't have that stress and that guilt, because I think a lot of times, parents, parents, stress can also lead to problems, right. And college students whose parents laid on the guilt or tried to manipulate them into do certain things actually had similar, you know, behaviors as adults, you know, like from generation to generation. But I think that we need to look into what we're doing and what our expectations are. Because again, if we are in that hamster wheel, if we are pushing ourselves to fatigue, then we're doing the same thing with our kids. And so to really take a step back, and to examine the situation and see how much can my child even tolerate and what they're able to do comfortably. But to give them again, that that I mean, most people can handle some some of that, right? If we provide our children with the tools that they need to help manage stress, because right now what's going on is that they may have, they may be able to, like, let you sit down with the child, and you come up with a schedule and everything works great. But then the child even within that schedule is now stressed. But right because it you know, depending if there's a game coming up, so we really need to start once ending and have this in this conversation with the parent or how much they can handle for really supplying your child with those tools that they can have to really help to lower that stress. Because right now, the only way that they know to manage stress, you know, is getting dopamine hits. Because when you have chronic stress, and then you chronic inflammation all take you down that road of needing quick dopamine hits, like scrolling the internet, seeing how many views opposed let or how many likes, you have online shopping, eating junk food or comfort food, internet surfing, you know, other others other sorts of addictions, porn, you know, drug addictions, I mean, any of these chronic use of short term fixes can really be bad. So just like we can teach a child to wash their hands after going to the bathroom, we can empower and educate a child to help them manage that stress and their routines, and lower inflammation, increase the prefrontal cortex functioning and develop strong sense of self regulation and skills to really increase resilience in this changing world. So and then creating a routine sitting down with your child and creating a routine. So then your child then can integrate these fundamental pieces that will no matter what your child is dealing with whatever they choose to do in their life, they have these pieces, these stress management techniques that they can then use to help them in any ease with any situation they may be dealing with.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 13:04

This, this is so good. And I'm super excited about my next question, which is, tell me waiting, we want to know, what are these stress relieving techniques? What are these tools that we can give our kids so that they can be really successful in

Madiha Saeed, MD 13:21

life? Absolutely. So I think it's all about a balanced routine. And, because that's what I've started to do implementing in my children having a routine because I mean, just like for you, we're not going to be in the routine of brushing our teeth, we're not going to do it, right or exercising, we got to start putting this into their daily routine for whenever you want to start and role modeling this behavior yourself is really the best place to start. So then you can slowly then incorporate your teen or child into these routines with you and making a really bonding experience. Because when you have a balanced routine that you can incorporate the stress management techniques into, then you have a balanced brain, body and behavior and immune system and gut functions, all of those things, you know, because then it can keep those damaging hormones at bay that are really causing problems. So first and foremost, let's start with the basics, right, offering your child to safe and secure, serene, well structured environment. Because I feel like chaos can really cause like within a child can really cause problems and stress in and of itself. So keeping your lines of communication open, making sure that there's limited judgment there and not negating a child's feelings. And to know that the child is just being loved and taken care of and their flaws, their imperfections, their mistakes, that can all create this foundation of love in and of itself help your body boost oxytocin that can lower your stress management skills. So just to create this love and secure a safe secure attachment so that they can, they know that they can come to you without that sense of guilt and stress, really, without any hesitation, then having rules sort of after the love is established, you want to make sure that there's clear rules. And I found that structure just like with all of us, we sometimes need structured lowers our stress, so we know what to expect, right? Because when your body knows what to expect, you're able to use your prefrontal cortex and your amygdala together to make rational decisions. But if things are just coming out of anything, then it's a fight and flight type of amygdala that is really taking over. And so, but a child's prefrontal cortex isn't even fully developed. So they need that order in out in their lives. So but the thing is, without using harshness, because that can then shut it down and lead to more resentment. So establishing sitting together and establishing those like family rules and clear boundaries, help them visualize, like an action plan and things to do, if they, God forbid, like not like, if they don't do the things that they're supposed to do, and coming up with those rules themselves and consequences. They're just throwing punishments out there, like every five minutes, you know, but if you have a set rules on around technology, sitting with your kid and coming up with these rules together, talking about cyber bullying, and making sure you know that they know that the importance of sleep, and making you know, and then coming up again, with with coming up with rules, and if something is broken, like if a rule is broken, then how what are you going to do about it. And to really have that open and open conversation. And again, especially with TAC, to role model that behavior, so for me, whenever I'm using technology, because kids can easily get stuck in that whirlwind. When I'm using technology, my kids know what I'm using it for. Right. And so and went in. And like, for example, I'm gonna, this is the things that I'm doing on this. So they know what I'm doing. I'm paying bills, I'm researching and writing a book, I'm working so that they know that this is not just for fun, but you can also, you know, this is my mom's on her thing, but to also recognize that when your child is ready for this, because sometimes kids, our kids brains are just not ready for the technology. And we should just give it early. But to have that open dialogue and conversation to know your child chores and independence, right in my house. My kids as we can decrease stress on everybody is in my house, we have rules, I'm not going to do something if you can do it yourself. And we work together as a family. So giving children responsibilities at an early age, with appropriate tasks that can then help the child realize, you know that I'm part of this family that I'm a leader like so in my house, it really decreases the stress on all of us. If

they know that when they wake up, my eight year old takes out the dishes in the dishwasher, right from the night before. My 10 year old makes all the lunches. My six year old will clean the playroom or will help with the lunches or do the laundry or whatever knees or whatever else he'll see you that needs to be done. He can do it. Or he'll help out his brothers or do the mop but he likes to choose what he wants to do. But but they do they come down there immediately without me even telling them. They're able to accomplish all these things. And then guess what? Before the and that they chose what they wanted to do, by the way. So that's I went to lunches, I want to do this. And we just got to do it in the fashion to get it done the more than they get to play in the morning. And, but guess what, by nine o'clock, all the dishes are done, all the laundry is done. The cleaning is done. We work together as a family gives the child a sense of accomplishment that oh my gosh, look at all the stuff that I just accomplished before this. I can do anything. So those are the things and giving the kids independence and what to choose and make helping them choose their own decisions. Right? Helping them strengthen their prefrontal cortex and the executive functions gives them a sense of freedom that, you know, this is what I want to do. And check this out and look at all the stuff that I accomplished. Right? We know that just spending time in nature boosts the immune system, it restores this connection between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. It helps to optimize brain health boost serotonin that leads to you know, better mood and improved ability to focus, better sleep mindfulness, and better increases energy, right. Yay. So getting your kids outside and I don't know what it is. I have to be completely honest, my kids love to play indoors. They love it, I pull it sometimes even like pulling teeth to get them outdoors. But it is so dumb, but they're still normal human beings right there. They're not like they're just angels from heaven. But it is. And they know that the importance of it, sometimes I have were like, oh, let's go play outside, let's do this together outside. Let's take your pokimane outside, they love to play because they're all four of them together. So I have to, I like, Let's go have a trainer like mama Gaga tree. But that sounds like let's go. But they want to just play together. And I'm like, okay, instead of it, I'll take a book outside and sit outside, and then they'll be around me, I'll do my work outside, and it'll be one to play around me outside. So that's how I've been able to sort of coax them to get outside sunshine, they tried to get them a little bit in the morning, also, like, they'll help me pick the especially right now. It's time to, you know, garden, the gardening season, and I'm getting all their tomatoes, and they love to do that in the morning, and then incorporate it into their foods. But the rest of the day, they love to play indoors. So trying to then find different ways that they can have fun outside. Because it doesn't take a long, you just need to get like 30 minutes a week, if not, least try to get them outdoors. Because that really does how good trees spending time in nature, you know, can really help and then mindfulness and meditation and that mindfulness is really important. Because we're living in a world that we're not thinking about that, right, we're just on our devices, we have no idea what's going on in our lives. So that in of itself is really powerful to improve body and brain. But just trying to keep it simple, and just allowing a child to play and have fun. And I realized that just when we live in this structured learning experiences, that causes a lot of stress for children, and too, but if we give play can then help a child's brain grow and mature, their prefrontal cortex increases BDNF, that enhances neuro, the development of noradrenaline and dopamine system in the child's brain that helps them focus and build new growth in the hippocampus and improves us Improve Self Esteem. So just that even that unstructured play can give a child that sense of independence, you know, allowing them to be comfortable in any situation, again, improving stress, and exercise. And so there's so many different things, but trying to keep it simple by you know, stress is stress is really inevitable. But it doesn't have to take control of our everyday decisions. But so then eating the right foods, you know, lowering those toxins in our environment, optimizing detoxification, supporting them with love and support and structure, and mindfulness exercise and nature play optimizing their sleep and positivity, they can all be incorporated in their child's daily routine that can then really help to raise mindful and resilient children.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 23:03

Brilliant. Couldn't have said it better. I actually, I probably couldn't have said it better. That was great. Um, and so for people who are listening who have kids, they may be like, This is blowing my mind right now this is like so much to do. What would you say are kind of like top one, two or three things that people can do right now to start to decrease the stress in their kids?

Madiha Saeed, MD 23:29

Gratitude. Right. So the one thing that you can start today is focus on gratitude. Because when we live in a world that was constantly bombarded with negativity and pessimism, and, you know, it's really easy for our subconscious to immediately start thinking negative, and that can start to put you on this cycle of negativity. But your perception can either be your pain, or your perception can be your power. So with anything that you're dealing with, you know, we need to add gratitude to that situation, to help lower the stress in any situation, right? Because, but the problem is that we are living in a world of such negativity that our subconscious immediately starts thinking negative. So we need to now consciously change our subconscious to start thinking positively. Right? Because we can think of us entire situations, oh my God, there's so much information, I can never do it. But there is if there's if you just focus on gratitude, immediately. So for me, immediately when you wake up in the morning, I want you to focus on 10 things that you're thankful for. And start this with your children, help them with that and then are just getting out get on and putting them outside in nature and having them play and exercise and really that unstructured play is really where it starts And then starting to build that love and connection that you have. Because only with that love connection, getting your kids in better brain moods and gratitude, can you start to then build on all the other aspects of it?

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 25:17

Excellent. And so then what about things to avoid? You told us of all the things to do? What about things to avoid? I would imagine, avoid the news of voice, social media, negative people, stuff like that. What do you what do you think?

Madiha Saeed, MD 25:31

So? Absolutely. Right now, I mean, the if you just look at the, I mean, especially during this pandemic, with online schools, and spending less time, you know, away from nature, and our kids are being more, they're exposed to blue light than ever before. But unfortunately, constant overexposure to this blue light, especially then at night can really disrupt sleep lead to leading to problems increasing body mass depression, suicide. They did a study with young adults who used more than 300 minutes per day, were 2.8 times more likely to develop depression with sick within six with six months. And then in 2019, they did a study published in JAMA Pediatrics where they did brain scans. And it revealed that toddlers who spent more time in front of the screens actually had lower myelination, or this white matter integrity in their brain. And so that further testing actually show that that lowered their literacy and language skills. And then there was another study again, that in the interference that that the technology caused a parent and a child interaction like that really interfered and found that 180 parent couples with young children under five, they found that technology led to more behavioral and emotional problems and children. Well, yes, and especially with like gaming now being added to the the WH OHS classification like that. There's literally gaming disorders now. And with Internet porn being an uncomfortable topic, but now we like children are becoming addicted to stuff that we don't even know about was going on who me and you are growing up like that it was like, because we didn't have access to those. I mean, I always just remember that when I was growing up, we had a cul de sac. And I just remember, we used to play there all day long, we didn't have access to all of these crazy things. But now technology is really causing problems. If we as parents can really try to limit this. Because it's really causing, you know, not even just not the cyber bullying and you know, the bad poor body image and poor posture and neck and obesity and loneliness. And, yeah, so there's one thing that you're going to try to avoid and try to limit, especially at night is this screen time. And so in my house, I know it's like, so I've given them My oldest is 13 years old. Right? So up till now we don't see a need for phones. So they don't have any phones. We don't have any iPads. We have no other electronics beside the television right now. And they have their I their their computers for school. But I've given them a structure like okay, like we're an hour and a half of screen time a day, we can choose what you want to do with that. Right? Most of the time, they'll just opt in only when I want to watch something. You know, I'm just like, that's the most where they were like, well, let's watch a movie. Or we'll do something together as a family instead of just on your own. And that's what they really love to do. They like that bonding time with me. I love it too, because I could sit and snuggle with them. But But and then they get to choose what they want to watch or do that with that one and a half hours, or even one hour on the weekdays and then maybe a little longer on the weekends. But but that's like a structure that's all in on that. And then the rest of the time is unstructured play.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 29:12

Excellent. Well,

Madiha Saeed, MD 29:15

take a deep breath after to help us relieve our stress.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 29:18

Exactly. This was amazing. Such an important topic. I'm so glad that you were here to share this information with us. You do have a free gift for our audience. Is that correct?

Madiha Saeed, MD 29:28

Yes, actually have a bunch of recipes that are brain and body health and there's a healing bundle. So lots of lots of amazing resources there.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 29:38

Wonderful. Yes, we'll put that link below. So anybody can check that out. And then where can they learn more about you?

Madiha Saeed, MD 29:45

A holistic mom and d@gmail.com is where they can reach out if they have questions, concerns, problems, and then holistic mama md.com is where they can find me.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 29:57

Brilliant. Thanks so much. for joining me today.

Madiha Saeed, MD 30:02

Excellent. Thank you. Thank you so much for having me. Um, and as usual, it's been a pleasure.

Evan H. Hirsch, MD 30:09

I hope you learned something on today's podcast. If you did, please share it with your friends and family and leave us a five star review on iTunes. It's really helpful for getting this information out to more fatigue people who desperately need it. Sharing all the experts I know in love, and the powerful tips I have on fatigue is one of my absolute favorite things to do. If you'd like more information, please sign up for my newsletter, where I share all important facts and information about fatigue from the foods and supplements to the programs and products that I use personally and recommend to others so that they can live their best lives. Just go to [fix your fatigue.com](https://fixyourfatigue.com) forward slash newsletter to sign up and I will send you this great information. Thanks for being part of my community. Just a reminder, this podcast is for educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for professional care by a doctor or other qualified medical professional. It is provided with the understanding that it does not constitute medical or other professional advice or services. If you're looking for help with your fatigue, you can visit my website and work with us at [fix your fatigue.com](https://fixyourfatigue.com) And remember, it's important that you have someone in your corner who is a credentialed health care professional to help you make changes. This is very important, especially when it comes to your home. Thanks for listening, and have an amazing day.