



Society for Research in Child Development

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PRESS RELEASE

Child Development (May/June issue)

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE ON May 15, 2008 (12:01 AM)

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Spillover Effects of Family and School Stress Linger in Adolescents' Daily Lives

Teenagers today face increasing pressures and demands from school and home. New research has found that stress at home affects adolescents' school life, and vice versa. What's more, that stress lasts for two days and affects academic performance across the high school years.

The research was carried out at the University of California, Los Angeles, and is reported in the May/June 2008 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The study, which examined the implications of stress in adolescents' daily lives, looked at the spillover between daily family stressors and school problems among an ethnically diverse group of 589 9th-grade students in the Los Angeles area. The teenagers reported their daily family and school experiences in a diary every day for two weeks, completing a checklist that assessed conflict with parents, family demands, learning difficulties, school attendance, and other experiences.

The study found that when adolescents experienced family stress, they had more problems with attendance and learning at school the next day. And when they had attendance and learning problems, they experienced more family stress the following day. These spillover effects continued for two days after the initial stressor occurred: Teenagers who experienced family stress had school adjustment problems not only the next day, but two days later. Similarly, teens with academic problems reported family stress for the next two days.

Stress also affected academic performance across the high school years, the researchers found. Adolescents who had higher levels of family stress and school problems at the start of high school, in 9th grade, saw declining academic achievement four years later, at the end of 12th grade.

“The findings from this study indicate that there are indeed short- and long-term consequences of daily stress that should not be overlooked,” according to Lisa Flook, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the study's lead author. “By the same token, the two-directional process of spillover between family and school identified here suggests that reducing stress in the family may have benefits for adolescents' school adjustment and vice versa.”

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Summarized from Child Development, Vol. 79, Issue 3, *Family and School Spillover in Adolescents' Daily Lives* by Flook, L, and Fuligni, AJ (University of California, Los Angeles).
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