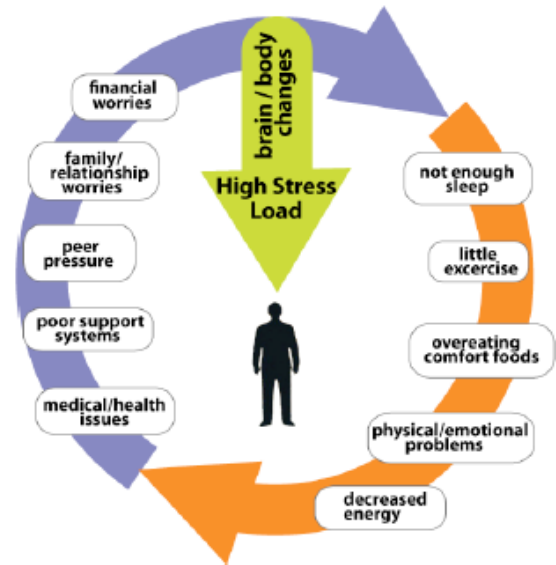


# The Effects of High Stress on the Brain and Body in Adolescents

Stress is believed to contribute to the physical and behavioral health problems of adolescents. Of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17, 2.3 % have fair or poor health, 5% miss 11 or more days of school because of illness or injury, 10% have smoked cigarettes, and 17% have used alcohol; of adolescents between ages 12 and 19, 18% are overweight. Stress also impacts cognitive functioning, diminishing concentration, memory, attention and decision-making capabilities.

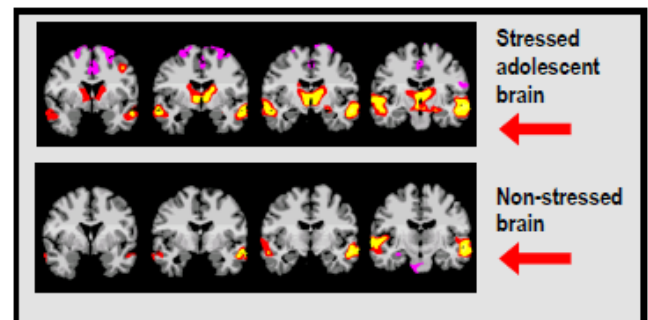
## Symptoms of Stress:

- Less energy and fatigue;
- Difficulty sleeping;
- More aches, pains and sickness – colds, flu, infections, migraines, back pain, flaring up of skin problems etc;
- Racing heart/high blood pressure;
- Feeling overwhelmed;
- Mood swings;
- Increased negative mood and rebellion;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Unwanted or racing thoughts;
- Increased intake of comfort foods; and
- Increased use of over the counter medications and prescription pain pills.



## These symptoms could be experienced as:

- Tune out in class rather than pay attention;
- Cut short class preparation time;
- Settling for lower grades;
- Lose control over emotions;
- Breaking rules;
- Truancy;
- Behavioral problems – cutting class;
- Difficulty getting out of bed;
- Give up on seeking solutions for problems and
- Withdrawal from social participation.



**Stress and poor lifestyle choices can prevent healthy eating, sleeping and exercise habits, wear down cells and organs and break down the body's stress defenses against environmental and social challenges.**