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Children's Diurnal Cortisol Responses to Negative Events at School and Home

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Highlights

1. Children who reported more peer problems on average showed flatter slopes of cortisol decline from wakeup to bedtime.
2. Children secreted more cortisol at wakeup following days when they reported more peer or academic problems than usual
3. Exposure to minor interparental conflict was not significantly associated with diurnal cortisol at the between- or within-person level of analysis

Abstract

This study examined the within-and between-person associations between daily negative events – peer problems, academic problems and interparental conflict – and diurnal cortisol in school-age children. Salivary cortisol levels were assessed four times per day (at wakeup, 30 minutes later, just before dinner and at bedtime) on eight days in 47 youths ages 8 to 13 years old (60% female; M age=11.28, SD=1.50). The relative contributions of within- and between-person variances in each stressor were estimated in models predicting same-day diurnal cortisol slope, same-day bedtime cortisol, and next morning wakeup cortisol. Children who reported more peer problems on average showed flatter slopes of cortisol decline from wakeup to bedtime. However, children secreted more cortisol at wakeup following days when they

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