



Handling Stress

*Don't let stress
get the best of you*

You & Your Child

Few jobs are as stressful as parenting.

Stress is built into family life. The demands of parenting, jobs, and your personal needs are often at odds. Change, which all families experience, is a big source of stress.

Stress is not all bad. It can be the “fuel” that powers you over obstacles, from job interviews to personal tragedy and loss.

But stress can be harmful, to yourself and your children and family. If not handled well, stress can lead to such things as abusive behavior, especially abuse directed toward your children. Stress can contribute to depression, physical illnesses, and alcohol and drug abuse. Stress can also damage relationships.

Stress is a part of life. Learning how to handle it is important to the health and happiness of your family and yourself.

On Back

The causes of stress and what you can do to cope.



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Don't let stress get the best of you

Stress has many causes within the home

Many things can cause stress. Causes of stress that are common to many households include these:

- Poor understanding of children. Some parents expect children to act like small adults. When they don't, parents can feel angry or frustrated.
- Too little support. Parenting is tough, demanding, time-consuming work. When you don't have help, or enough of it, it can become very stressful.
- Low self-esteem. Parents who aren't sure they know how to parent or have trouble rolling with the ups and downs of parenting may come to see every frustration as a personal failure.

Other common sources of stress in the home include money worries, illness, and problems parents might have at work.

Learn to manage your anger and frustration

Face up to your feelings. Recognize that getting angry and frustrated is part of life, especially when you have young children.

- Recognize your angry times. Learn when you tend to get angry, what things frustrate you, and the kinds of problems in your relationships that lead to these feelings.
- Find a way to vent your feelings. If calling a friend helps to relieve feelings of anger or frustration, do it. Take a walk or read – whatever works for you.
- Pause before letting your feelings out. Count to ten, or think about the effect a burst of anger might have. Tell your child, or whoever is making you angry, how you feel.
- Be patient. It takes time to learn to manage anger and frustration.

Understand that children will be children

No matter how much you wish children would act like small adults, they won't.

Children misbehave. But they usually don't misbehave on purpose. They have their own way of thinking and acting.

The more you know about how children develop and grow, the easier it will be to understand their behavior and be more forgiving when they misbehave.

Take a break once in awhile

Some mothers wouldn't think of having a babysitter watch their child while she takes a break. But mothers need some time for themselves.

Have someone take over once in awhile, if only for a few hours.

A pause in a demanding household routine can be refreshing and helpful in preventing stress from building.

Build yourself a support network

Families and friends are great sources of support. Use them. Ask them to help once in a while, whether that help means babysitting for a spell or just coming over to talk.

The greater your support network, the less likely you are to run yourself down or reach the point where stress gets the best of you.

Take care of yourself

Staying healthy is an important part of managing stress.

Make sure you get enough exercise. Exercise is a good way to ease stress. A simple walk every day will help. You may want to consult your doctor before going on a vigorous exercise program.

Eating right is also important. And getting enough sleep and rest to feel refreshed will help you deal with your child patiently and lovingly.

