



Handling Stress

Don't let stress get the best of you

You & Your Child

A guide for
new parents

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.



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INFANT SLEEP PATTERNS

Stress can slow your baby's progress

Babies who had a difficult birth, such as premature babies, may take a little longer to get to the point where they are able to sleep through the night.

Also, if your baby's daytime environment is very busy and stressful, he or she may take a little longer to start sleeping through the night.

Let your baby sleep when he or she wants to sleep

It's a good idea not to try to force your baby into some kind of sleeping pattern.

If you can, let your baby sleep when he or she feels like sleeping. Try to relax and enjoy the quiet hours. And be patient with your baby's sleeping habits.

Try setting a bedtime ritual

Many parents adopt a bedtime ritual as a way of getting their babies to follow a certain sleeping pattern. This ritual is something you and your baby do just before bedtime. It signals to your child that bedtime is approaching.

Do things that are calming to your baby, like singing softly or reading. Hugs and kisses may help ease your child into sleep, too.

Be calm and loving

Be calm and loving. But down is down.

If your baby wakes in the middle of the night, try to keep him or her in bed, if possible.

Try restarting your ritual or do some other calming thing, such as patting your baby softly, or talking to your baby quietly until he or she falls back asleep.

