

stress and parenting

Parenting is hard! It's no wonder that parents are often over stressed. Stress often gets worse if it is ignored. Your actions and words can easily get out of control. Stress management for parents is necessary so you can continue to provide a safe, nurturing home for your children. Make stress management a part of your daily routine. When you take care of yourself, you are taking care of your family.

Stress? What Stress?

You can become tense when you are bothered, worried, hurried, or anxious. When you are tense, it is difficult to function and make good decisions. Parents are often too busy taking care of everyone else that they forget to take care of themselves. But chronic stress can affect health as well as relationships.

Preventing Stress

Understanding stress and how your body reacts to it will help you learn to control it before you become over stressed. The best way to reduce stress is recognize your warning signs and to try to prevent it before it occurs. Here are some tips you can try.

- **Get enough sleep.** When you have enough sleep, your body is more prepared for life's challenges. Sleep and naps are important for your child's health and temperament. They are important to yours, too!
- **Be healthy.** Eat right. Exercise for health and for stress relief. Exercise helps you breathe properly and relax your mind and body. Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol.
- **Have realistic expectations.** Know what you can reasonably expect to do in a day. Know what behaviors are developmentally appropriate for your child.

- **Don't take it personally.** When your child misbehaves, or your friend snaps at you—don't take it personally! Understand that people have bad days, and children are often "acting their age."
- **Have some fun.** Children love to play, and play is a great way to release tension. Make having fun a daily routine—go outside, play hide and seek, or meet with friends.
- Practice feeling calm. Prepare for a time you might feel stress by imagining that moment and walking through it. Breathe deeply and imagine your responses to a tantrum or other stressful situation, and imagine feeling calm.

Ways to Ease Stress

Whatever you do, don't ignore it! If stress can't be prevented, try some of these tips to reduce it as soon as you realize you are stressed. The goal is to return your body and mind to a normal state so you can be the best parent for your child.

- Take a deep breath.
- Write it down.
- Go for a walk.
- Listen to music.
- Relax your standards.
- Focus on the positive.
- Laugh.

Parenting is hard!

Parents need support. Know ahead of time the people you can rely on when you need support. Reach out. You might be surprised how many people feel exactly the way you do and are eager to talk. Ask for advice, share your experiences, and be a good listener. By reaching out, you teach your children that together we can get through anything!