

Parenting & Stress

What Parents Can Do To Cope With Stress

Being a parent has its rewards and challenges. There are no books, rules, or guidelines that we can follow. Much of what we learn is by trial and error. Parenting can place many demands on your time and patience. And sometimes the pressures can be overwhelming, making you feel frustrated, irritated, resentful and helpless - all normal feelings.

Do any of these thoughts sound familiar? I feel lonely and isolated; resentful and angry; frustrated with my kids; disappointed in myself; and unsure of myself. If you're experiencing any of these feelings, you're probably experiencing stress.

What can you do?

If you need help, reach out for it.

When you're under stress, you may lash out at those closest to you - even your children. When stress builds and you find yourself losing control or giving up, there are people and community agencies that can help.

Talk about your feelings with others.

Share your feelings with someone you trust - a friend, a relative, your spouse, your clergyman, your doctor, or a close neighbor. If your child is old enough, communicate your feelings to him or her. Children can feel when something is wrong, so telling them how you're feeling can help them understand and prevent them from blaming themselves.

Try to maintain balance in your life.

Maintaining balance in your life, particularly work/life balance, can significantly reduce the amount of stress you feel. Try to keep any stress or problems you're experiencing at work away from home.

Stress relievers. When you feel overwhelmed and need to calm down, what can you do?

- Breathe deeply or count to ten. Put your child in a safe place and go to another room for a few minutes.
- Stop and think about what, exactly, is making you angry. Is it your children, or is it something else?
- Designate a place, even a chair or a corner, as a place where you can go when you feel you're losing your temper. Designate a separate, safe place for your child.
- Pick your battles. There are many things in life that you simply have no control over or that are not that important. Focus your energy on things that really matter.

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