

Parents: Stress Less!

10 Tips for a Less Stress-filled You



As a parent, life is often pulling you and your thoughts in a hundred different directions. This can be stressful. We know a small amount of stress can sometimes be a good thing. It keeps you on your toes to do your best job. It motivates you to plan and follow-through to keep things running smoothly. But more than a little stress for an extended period of time can be overwhelming. No matter what your stress level – low, medium, or high – it is important to take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself, after all, is supporting your child and family as it helps you to be an even more responsive and effective parent.

To help clear your mind, ask yourself some questions when you feel stressed. Consider writing your responses on paper or in a journal.

- What am I feeling and where did these feelings come from?
- How is the stress affecting me?
- What is within my control and what is without my control?



- Will anything change if I worry about it?
- What is something I can “set aside” for now?
- How can I fill my tank?

Next, you can choose one, or more, of these ten tips to focus on right now and then add other practices along the way.

- 1. Get your best Sleep:** Sleeping is how your body relaxes and repairs. Try to find a regular time for bed that allows 7-8 hours of sleep a night. Surround yourself with calming sounds and smells and check to see that the room temperature is comfortable. It can also help to avoid electronics 30 minutes before bedtime.
- 2. Get outside and moving:** Being physically active reduces stress. Find an activity you enjoy and try to dedicate time for it every day. Set goals and challenge yourself to move in new ways, in new places, and more often.
- 3. Eat healthy:** Eating healthy and drinking enough water helps you stay fit and fight off stress. You can track habits by writing down what you eat and drink for a few days. Then, take a peek and see if you can add more foods that fuel you in healthy ways or drink more water to keep you hydrated.
- 4. Notice:** Being mindful, or, being “present”, is one key way to center yourself and reduce stress. Practice noticing your surroundings and being a good listener.
- 5. Keep consistent:** Setting and sticking to rules, expectations, and limits provides a sense of security which can help reduce stress.
- 6. Plan ahead:** Having a predictable routine can help you feel more organized. You can also write things down as reminders.
- 7. Communicate clearly:** Having two-way conversations with your child, your child’s caregivers, and others helps avoid stress from miscommunications and misunderstandings. Restate what you think you heard and ask questions if you aren’t clear or sure.
- 8. Be patient:** Being able to calmly wait is a great skill for reducing stress. Practice patiently waiting by reading, talking to someone, or going for a short walk.
- 9. Think helpful thoughts:** Give your brain soothing thoughts. *I have everything I need in this moment. I have done hard things before and I can do it again. I’m doing the best I can with what I have and that is enough.*
- 10. Celebrate YOU!** Pausing to recognize the many wonderful things you do is important. Take time to thank yourself, as well as the others who help you along the way.



When stress gets the best of you... First, just breathe:

Breathe:



When you are feeling stressed, take a breath. Breathe in your nose for two seconds, then out of your mouth for four. Then breathe in for four seconds and out for eight. Finally breathe in for eight seconds and out for 16. You will have spent less than one minute getting yourself recentered.

Make a plan:



Taking time to reflect and plan can help you respond to a stressful moment better and differently the next time. What felt stressful? If you feel your stress rising, how can you plan ahead to help stay calm?

Relax and repair:



If you find yourself short-tempered or impatient, relax and “repair” conflict to then move forward. *I’m sorry. I’d like to do a better job... How can I help make it better? Next time I will...*

Ask for help:



Understanding why we are having the emotions we are is helpful in thinking about how best to take care of those emotions, including stress. Talk to a healthcare professional if your stress is causing anxiety or other concerns. Asking for help is part of taking care of yourself.

Useful Websites and Sources:

Symptoms of stress, ideas for coping, and resources for crises
<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/cope-with-stress/index.html>

Tips for helping children of all ages cope with stress
<https://childmind.org/topics/covid-kids-mental-health-challenges/#parenting-self-care-during-covid>

Relaxation tips to beat stress
https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/angry_child/stress/#gs.a23n2c

