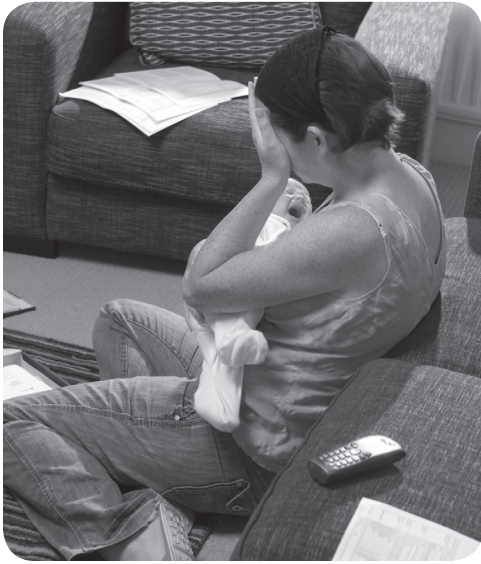


MANAGING STRESS



Reducing stress is important, for your sake as well as for your children. Reducing your stress gives you time and energy to be the best parent you can be.

Recognizing the signs of stress

- Feeling tired most of the time
- Snapping at family and friends
- Not being able to make decisions
- Changes in sleeping habits—either sleeping a lot or not sleeping enough
- Not wanting to eat, or overeating
- Headaches/stomachaches
- Muscle tension leading to pain in the neck, shoulders or back
- Not being able to concentrate

Although some stressful tasks can't be avoided, changing the way we do them can help reduce stress. Try to plan your day the night before using a to-do list, and schedule the most important or unpleasant tasks first.

Making Errands Less Stressful

Running errands with a child can be stressful, but these simple tips can make time out of the house more enjoyable for both of you:

- Plan to run errands right after breakfast, when children are not tired or hungry.
- Be prepared to meet your child's needs. Pack a bag with a few diapers, wet wipes, diaper ointment, a change of clothes, a zip lock bag for soiled clothes, a pacifier and a small toy.
- If you are not breastfeeding, bring along a bottle with powdered formula and a bottle of water so you can mix it when needed.
- For older children, bring a healthy snack. Granola bars, raisins, Cheerio's, Gold Fish crackers or other favorites will hold them over until you can all get some lunch.
- A removable sunshade for the vehicle's side windows will protect your baby's skin and eyes from the sun and make the ride more pleasant.
- Limit the number of errands you try to accomplish in a day. Babies can be over stimulated by too many sights and sounds and may become fussy, while toddlers get bored having to sit still for long periods of time.
- Be flexible! Take care of the most urgent matters first, so if children get tired or fussy, you can head home and leave the remaining errands for another time.
- If you have several children to keep up with, ask a friend or family member to come along for your outing and help with the children.



25 Ways to Reduce Everyday Stress

Do...

- Get up 15 minutes earlier
- Keep things in perspective and accept what you cannot change (the other line always moves faster, etc.)
- Learn to say NO to extra activities
- Join a parent support group
- Spend time with friends—have a potluck supper to make it easier on yourself
- Set realistic goals
- Prioritize tasks, putting your energy into things that bring the most benefit
- Simplify meal times by making out your shopping list with easy meals in mind, and cooking enough one day for leftovers the following day
- Ask friends or family for help with errands, cleaning or child care
- Eat well-balanced meals and drink plenty of water every day
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise because regular exercise relieves stress, lowers the risk of depression and anxiety, boosts your immune system, increases energy, and sets a good example for your children
- Attend worship services
- Break big jobs into sections and focus on one section at a time
- Combine activities when possible. For example, walk the dog with the children and talk to them about their day while you walk.
- Choose a hairstyle that is easy to maintain and clothes that don't need special care
- Have a desk, table or other place where all bills and important papers can be organized and addressed at a regular time
- Follow a set schedule. When children know what to expect, mealtimes, bedtimes, chores and homework are less stressful for the whole family
- Keep a small calendar with you at all times to keep up with appointments
- Make duplicate keys for home and car
- Remember, your children need your unconditional love

Don't...

- Self-medicate
- Try to be perfect
- Try to "fix" other people
- Feel guilty for asking for help

HERE'S HELP

Use the **Family Resources on pages 91–95** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.



When your children grow up, they will not remember the perfectly clean house or elaborate meals, but the time spent together sharing love and laughter.

FAST FIX

Managing and Controlling Anger

Experiencing anger is not good for your health. It causes your adrenaline and blood pressure to rise above normal levels. Even worse, you could end up hurting someone or doing something that you will regret later. Below are some tips to help you calm down and control your anger, especially when you are with your children. Remember, children imitate ways to solve problems.

- 1. Relax and Breathe.** Calm yourself down. Take a deep breath. As you exhale, imagine your anger leaving you with your breath. Release it and be free. Repeat this step over and over until you feel peace inside.
 - 2. Release your anger through safe outlets.** Exercise regularly, call a friend and vent, clean your house or water your plants. Just make sure you know what your safe outlets are.
 - 3. Forgive and forget.** Learn to forgive those who have caused you pain and suffering. This doesn't mean you have to contact them and make a big deal over it, this is meant to give yourself inner peace by releasing emotional pain.
 - 4. Exercise.** Engaging in exercise increases your endorphins. Your angry mood can change to a happy one if you get involved in exercises that you enjoy doing.
 - 5. Listen to soothing music.** This helps calm your soul. Take 20 minutes to relax and listen to music while you take some deep breaths.
- If you find these tips do not work and you are having trouble controlling your anger, please talk to your nurse or doctor about other ways to deal with anger.