

# STRESS TIPS for PARENTS

**Discover the Power of “No.”** In other words, don't bite off more than you can chew. For everything that gets thrown your way, ask yourself: Do I really have time for this? And if so, at what cost? Setting limits and saying no when necessary are real sanity savers.

**Don't try to be Supermom or Superdad.** Don't buy into the ideal of the effortless superparent with the magazine cover house and well-dressed children. This ideal isn't possible, even if you didn't work or if you had 3 nannies. It's okay if the laundry or dishes pile up; they will get done. Besides, your kids already think you're super anyway.

**Get your kids involved.** Get your child or children to help out around the house, if they aren't already. Even the little ones can pitch in, even if it's just setting the table or putting away laundry. Turn it into a game and they may even be excited to help out.

**Check your stress levels.** A lot of us learn to deal with massive stress loads by thinking “that's just the way it is.” But accumulated or chronic stress can be damaging to you physically, mentally and emotionally (e.g. stiffness and pain, irritability, poor sleep, focusing on negative). Reducing and better managing stress (exercise, deep breathing, eating well and regularly, finding time for joy) can greatly reduce the harmful effects.

**Find that me time.** It's perfectly normal to feel like you need to always put your family before yourself. That said, even the most dedicated need their me time. Make it your job (but a fun job) to set aside at least 15 minutes each day to do something for yourself. You might be surprised at just how refreshed you can feel. Remember: you're not being selfish!

**Make the most of what's around you.** There may be precious resources right under your nose that you're not (and should be) using. The saying “it takes a village to raise a child” is not far off; it's not odd to ask your partner, friends, relatives, and neighbors to help. The bartering system can come in handy too; trading childcare for home-cooked meals, help with yard work, general repairs, or crafts is not uncommon.

**Ask for help.** Sometimes stress becomes too much to handle on your own. Speaking with a professional can help bring things into perspective and make them easier to handle. This is very important to remember: seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness (especially when your health is on the line).

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