

Family Stress

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Tips to Find Family Peace

- ◆ Take care of your family by taking care of yourself.
- ◆ Have realistic expectations; don't compare yourself to others and watch out for "should."
- ◆ Exercise stress away by walking, running, dancing, or anything else that moves muscles.
- ◆ Know your stressors. Be aware of how stress impacts your mood and thinking.
- ◆ Take extra care of relationships in times of stress.
- ◆ Turn up quiet. Take tech time-outs from TV and other electronics for periods of family calm.
- ◆ Reduce parental conflict and arguing, especially around children.
- ◆ Model positive stress management skills for your child.
- ◆ Minimize multi-tasking and over-scheduling.
- ◆ Practice stress reducers you can use anytime/anywhere to calm yourself (breathing exercises or brief meditations work great).
- ◆ Boost your mood by treating yourself often to happy thoughts, memories, photos, and laughter.



Photograph by Paula Cartwright

Why Reduce Family Stress?

- We can improve our parenting and other family relationships through better stress management.
- We protect our children's development by limiting exposure to intense or long-term stress.
- We make better decisions when we're not reacting out of anger, fear, and other stressful emotions.



Dial Down Stress

Although some stress can be helpful and motivating, too much can be harmful. Severe stress has been shown to impact the brain development and long-term mental and physical health of young children. Family stress can also hurt relationships.

Stress: How much is too much?

Stress is a normal response to challenges. Our heart rate quickens bringing more blood sugar to our muscles. Our breath speeds up bringing oxygen to the brain. These changes give us alertness and energy to deal with the situation.

But stress that is intense or long-term can be toxic. Extreme stress, such as neglect or family violence, may interfere with the development, learning, and long-term emotional and physical health of children.

Even moderate stress can hurt relationships when we don't cope well. Stress interferes with our thinking. When we're stressed, we can become edgy, lose our temper, and say or do things we regret. Our own stress can also increase stress in children.

We can dial down some stressors by reducing family conflict and yelling--especially around children, by providing consistency and structure to promote a calm household and by

maintaining a schedule that includes downtime.

We can also help our children build resilience by modeling positive stress-coping strategies. Exercise, hobbies, mindful breathing, meditation, and laughing are a few ways to bring our bodies into a calmer state and reduce stress chemicals.

Supportive, nurturing relationships between children and parents or other caregivers have been shown to buffer kids against stress.

Building a strong relationship with our children is one of the best ways to help them develop a healthy response to stress.



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UW-Extension Family Living Programs

"Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well"



[Link To References](#)

For more information, please contact your county UW-Extension office:

UW-Extension Washington County
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Family Living menu - Parenting and Child Care

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