

Stress Management Tips

1. Learn your stress signs: Learning to identify how you react to stress will help you curb your overload mode. Common stress signs include: Rising blood pressure or spiked heart rate (which can make you feel a little dizzy). Speaking louder or yelling. Irritability, more impatient or experiencing lapses in judgment. Imagine how those behaviors affect your kids! Tune in to your body until you identify your warning signs.

2. Take a break: You may not be able to avoid all the stress, but you can get away for just a few minutes to feel less overwhelmed. Giving yourself permission to take a brief "stress break" is often enough to decompress or just give a new perspective. This can include:

Taking a Mommy time out: Put up a "do not disturb" sign on your bedroom door. Listen to relaxing music or plant a picture in your mind of a soothing place. Take five minutes to decompress.

Give permission to "take ten": Let everyone in your family know it's OK to walk away until they can get back in control. Some families create a family signal such as using an umpire "Time Out" hand gesture that means that the person needs to decompress.

3. Create solutions for your "hot" times: Stress mounts for moms at predictable times, such as in the morning when everyone is dashing to get out the door or at that dinner time witching hour. Identify when you are most irritable, and find a simple way to curb the friction during that "hot" time. For instance: If mornings are stressful because your kid can't decide (or find) what to wear: lay clothes out the night before. If your car pool is frantic because you can't find your keys, make an extra set.

4. Learn deep breathing or meditation: Deep abdominal breathing, meditation, and prayer are proven to help moderate stress and help the body relax. Best yet, you can also teach the tension-relieving strategies to your kids! How to start:

Use slow, deep breaths. Inhale slowly to a count of five, pause for two counts, and then slowly breathe out the same way, again counting to five. Repeating the sequence creates maximum relaxation. (Using bubble blowers or pinwheels helps younger kids learn to take slow deep breaths to blow "meanies" away.)

Try elevator breathing. Close your eyes, slowly breathe out three times, then imagine you're in an elevator on the top of a very tall building. Press the button for the first floor and watch the buttons for each level slowly light up as the elevator goes down. As the elevator descends, your stress fades away.

5. Exercise together: The research is growing that exercise keeps stress at bay whether it's walking, bike riding, swimming, playing basketball or something else. The trick is finding the type you enjoy. Best yet, find a strategy to do with your kids so everyone benefits.

Just walk: Walk alone, with your kids or find one other mom to join for a short walk each day.

Ride off the tension: There is nothing like riding bikes with your kids.

Dance stress away: A ten-minute spontaneous dance session with your kids is a great tension reliever whether the music is a nursery rhyme or Coldplay.

6. Take time to laugh: The American Psychological Association reports that stressed people often hold a lot of stress in their faces. Laughs, smiles and giggles can help relieve some of that tension. When was the last time you belted out a good, long belly laugh with your kids? Find ways to bring a little more fun into your life to curb stress and create fun family memories.

Be spontaneous: Celebrate the dog's birthday by baking him a cake. Eat dinner in reverse. Tape a dollar bill to the garbage can (and don't say anything about it) to see who will take out the trash. Just have fun!

7. Find a support group: The truth is we devote so much time to our families, we forget to take time for our social needs, whether it's our significant other or our girlfriends. Relationships help reduce our stress and restore balance.

Find a Mommy coach: Don't stress alone about your kids. Share your concerns with another mom and vow you'll be one another's cheerleader. Talking about your stress with someone who cares can reduce anxieties. Or join a social network with a mom chat room.

Schedule date nights: The date doesn't have to cost anything -- a walk, going to the park, watching a rented movie, or sitting in the car in your driveway with wine and cheese. It's just time alone with your significant other.

There's a reason that flight attendants remind us to put on our oxygen masks first, then on the kids. We can't take care of our families unless we take time for ourselves, and Moms are notorious at putting ourselves on the backburner. Take time for yourself. Make sure to check your stress. After all, a happy, less-stressed mom makes happier, less-stressed kids. Always has. Always will.

Websites

1. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/ready-snap-7-tips-stressed-parents/>
2. https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/angry_child/stress/#gs.zxnymu
3. <https://www.parentingscience.com/parenting-stress-evidence-based-tips.html>