

TIPS FOR PARENTS

As a parent, you will find from time to time that your child care needs will change, whether temporarily or permanently. By knowing how to take care of your needs during this time, you will be able to give your child better care.

COPING WITH STRESS

Sooner or later everybody feels stress or frustration on the job, especially when the job is the full-time position of being a parent. No matter how much you love your child or children, there are times when their actions or outside frustrations cause you to reach the boiling point. Don't let off steam by striking out at your child. Instead, consider the following alternatives:

1. **Count to 10.** Give yourself a chance to regain control by going to another room or outside for a few minutes. If your child is young, put him or her in a safe place first, such as a crib or playpen.
2. **Lie Down and Relax.** Put your feet up, place a cool cloth on your forehead and for a few minutes let your thoughts drift to some place far away from your everyday life. Daydreaming is free.
3. **Vent your Frustrations Privately.** Go to another room, close the door and scream or cry. Or write your frustrations down in a journal.
4. **Call Someone Who Cares.** It might be a friend or a relative, but do call someone who understands you and knows what you're going through. By talking the situation over with them, you'll get the support you need and rid yourself of the frustration and sense of being along with your stress. If you don't know who to call, call 1-800-THE KIDS.
5. **Pamper Yourself.** When your child takes his nap, don't rush to make dinner or clean up the house. Instead, take time off to listen to music, watch TV, read a book or newspaper----or do nothing at all.
6. **Do Something Physical.** You don't have to stay cooped up in your house, letting the stress of the day build up. Take your child out for a walk to the playground or go shopping. The physical activity is good for all of you and is great outlet for pent-up feelings of frustration.
7. **Change Your Daily Routine.** The same old routine day in and day out is frustrating to everyone, especially to parents. Vary what you do every day and have something different to look forward to at the beginning of each day----even if it is only a walk to a new location.
8. **Try to Arrange Neighborhood Babysitting Groups.** If there are other parents in the neighborhood at home with children, see if they would be willing to do alternate caring for the children. This frees everyone up for a day to themselves and gives the children the opportunity to meet others their own age.

If the stress you feel cannot be relieved by using any of these suggestions, it's possible that you need outside help in dealing with stress. Refer to the "Where Can I Call if I Need Help" document. Remember that there is help available and often it's offered free of charge. Don't think that what you're feeling is so bad you can't share it with someone else: it's happened to many other people, and there are ways of helping you and your children through the crisis.