

# MANAGING STRESS AS A PARENT

*seven strategies for healthy coping*



# 1 IDENTIFY SYMPTOMS

How does your body signal that you're stressed? Look for symptoms that stress causes. You may experience the following reactions when you are stressed:

**Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, stomachaches, rapid heartbeat, tension in your muscles, shortness of breath, etc.

**Emotional Symptoms:** Irritability, impatience, mood swings, etc.

**Behavioral Symptoms:** Becoming withdrawn, losing your temper, restlessness, over-sleeping, etc.

List your most common symptoms: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# RECOGNIZE TRIGGERS

Be aware of when you begin to experience symptoms of stress. Consider the circumstances that may have caused the reaction. Your triggers may include:

**Life Changes:** Buying a house, changing jobs, becoming pregnant, etc.

**Environment:** Your son's loud video game, whiny toddler, cluttered kitchen, etc.

**Unpredictable Events:** Your child's ear infection, a flat tire, leaking roof, etc..

**Fears:** Concern for your child's health, your financial future, your career, etc.

**Uncertainty:** .Will school be canceled? Will I lose my job? Will I get sick?

**Beliefs:** I'm not a good parent, other families have it more together, etc.

List your personal triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# **PRACTICE COPING**

Find ways to cope with your stress. Choose methods that are unique to you and effective in reducing your anxiety. Here are examples of coping skills you can try:

- Say a prayer
- Relax your muscles
- Play calming music
- Make a gratitude list
- Squeeze a pillow
- Practice deep breathing
- Visualize a happy place
- Take a short break
- Recite an affirmation
- Think of a favorite memory

How will you cope? \_\_\_\_\_



# SCHEDULE SELF-CARE



You cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritizing self-care will make you a more effective, compassionate parent. Make self-care part of your routine and consider trying these activities:

- **Stretch your muscles**
- **Complete a workout**
- **Take a warm bath**
- **Make plans with friends**
- **Read a book**
- **Call someone you love**
- **Watch your favorite movie**
- **Indulge in a sweet treat**
- **Write in a journal**
- **Start a new hobby**

How will you practice self-care? \_\_\_\_\_

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# 5 **VERBALIZE EMOTIONS**

Communicate your feelings to your family. Acknowledge your stress and share how you plan to cope with your child. Modeling these behaviors will show your child that stress is normal while demonstrating the importance of healthy coping skills. Here are some ways to approach the conversation:

**I'm feeling stressed, and I have a headache. Relaxing my muscles will help my headache go away. Do you want to snuggle with me?**

**I'm feeling sad right now. When I feel this way, it helps to remember a favorite memory. One of my favorites is \*insert memory.\* Do you have a favorite?**

**I'm feeling anxious. When I feel this way, it helps to practice my breathing. Do you want to practice with me?**



# REMAIN AUTHENTIC

There is beauty in your everyday life. Being authentic will reduce the pressure to have the "perfect" life and release the stress surrounding unrealistic expectations. Embrace the good, the bad, and the ugly with these suggestions:

- **Limit your time on social media, where highlight reels dominate**
- **Be vulnerable and remain honest about your imperfections**
- **Be present by fully engaging in the conversations around you**
- **Embrace the chaos. One day you will miss this crazy, beautiful chapter of your life**

Today I will be authentic by: \_\_\_\_\_



# **7** **FOCUS** **ON CHRIST**

Remain Christ-centered. God is in control, and he will help you through these moments of stress. Make devotion and prayer a regular part of your routine, and be sure to include your family.

Scripture to reflect on in times of stress:

**"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."-John 14:27**

**"Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken."-Psalm 55:22**

**"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."-Isaiah 41:10**





If you or someone you know is in need of counseling services, please contact our team at:

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