

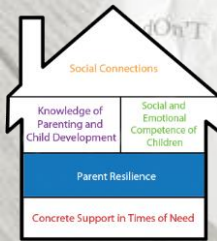
# Parental Resilience



## Parental Resilience



**Be strong and flexible when you face difficulties, adversity, and trauma.**



**Personal stress**  
**Family/social stress**  
**Work/school stress**  
**Environmental stress**

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## Building Parental Resilience



- Think of a time when you lost your patience:
  - ▣ How did you feel when it was happening?
  - ▣ What kind of day were you having?
  - ▣ Was there anyone who stepped in and helped?
  - ▣ What might make the situation worse?



**20% of us are born with an ability to be resilient, but 80% of us can learn to be resilient**

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## H.A.L.T.



- How well do we interact with others when we are **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired**?
- Our **response** matters more than the stressor.
- What happens to our bodies when we are stressed?




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## Why Some Adapt to Stressors Better than Others



1. An outlet for frustration
2. A sense of predictability
3. A feeling of control
4. An optimistic outlook
5. Social support



Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers, Dr. Robert Sapolsky

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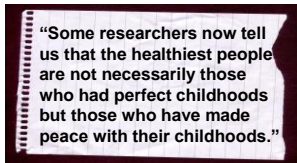
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## How do you best manage stress???



- Positively managing stress helps us feel better; feeling better helps us act better, which helps others treat us better, which helps us feel better!



(From "Taking Care of the Parent: Replacing Stress with Peace")

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## Your Reality is Your Choice



- The human brain receives 11 million pieces of information every second from our environment, but can only process 40 bits per second.

The Tradeoff:  
I think about  
**negatives**, and the  
less **positives** I  
see... **OR**



Change my mindset  
and **choose** to think  
about more **positives**  
around me!

- We have to **choose** what we focus on and what to dismiss or ignore (but our brains are wired to focus on threats!)
- Your reality is a **choice** – what you choose to focus on shapes how you perceive and interpret your world.

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## Rethinking STRESS



70-90% OF DOCTOR VISITS ARE  
DUE TO STRESS-RELATED  
ISSUES

STRESS NEG  
MOST OF TI  
HUL

STRESS  
IS  
DESTRUCTIVE

STRESS IS LINKED TO THE 6  
LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH



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## Rethinking & Reframing STRESS



- Research **also** shows stress **CAN** be helpful – if managed correctly
- Stress **CAN** create:
  - ▢ Greater mental toughness
  - ▢ Deeper relationships
  - ▢ Increased awareness
  - ▢ New perspectives
  - ▢ A better appreciation of life
  - ▢ Heightened sense of meaning
  - ▢ Strengthened priorities

STRESS  
IS (can be)  
ENHANCING

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## Rethinking & Reframing STRESS



- The lesson? Stop dwelling on it and sharing it – it leads to more stress, anxiety, and depression!
- When stress happens:
  - ▢ View it as a challenge, instead of a threat.
  - ▢ Recognize it can improve your productivity as a person **and** as a parent.
  - ▢ Think about the meaning behind the stress.
  - ▢ Replace stress with strengths!

Stress is inevitable, its  
negative effects are not!

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## Why We React (instead of respond) to Stress the Way We Do



Born with ~86 billion brain cells called neurons!



What happens when it rains on a fresh pile of dirt?




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## Police Car Drawing



On a sheet of paper, you will take 30 seconds and draw a picture of a police car.




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## Training Your Brain to See Multiple Perspectives



Focus on the picture below and see how many attributes, phrases, labels you can come up with in 30 seconds (ignore grammar – go for speed!)

- +3 points for every positive (and true) descriptor and +1 for every negative one



Research shows that people who have a positive to negative ratio of 3:1 are more optimistic and happier.  
2:1 – languishing  
1:1 – depressed

Try to balance every piece of bad news with 3 pieces of good news.

Seek out the positives!

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## Child's Mess



Focus on this picture and see how many attributes, phrases, or labels you can come up with in 30 seconds (ignore grammar – go for speed!)

- +3 points for every positive (and true) descriptor and +1 for every negative




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## We can learn to see things from different perspectives




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## Brain-body Connection: Positive Visualization



- Study: 3 groups of volunteers
  - ▣ Group 1 – finger curls, 15 min/day, 12 weeks
  - ▣ Group 2 – visualize finger curls, same time period
  - ▣ Group 3 – do nothing, same time period
- Results
  - ▣ Group 1 – 53% increase in finger strength
  - ▣ **Group 2 – 35% increase in finger strength**
  - ▣ Group 3 – no increase
- **Thinking** about exercise activates the same areas of the brain as real exercise!




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## Preventing vs. Managing Stress



- Take in more positivity – dwell on it, 5-15 sec.  
*Loads positive experience into implicit memory*
- Create positive experiences in the present and/or recall them in the past
- Absorb them, stay in the moment, appreciate it
- Share them, write them, share them again!

### Activates positive mental state & installs it in brain

**“When you tilt toward the good, you’re not denying or resisting the bad. You’re simply acknowledging, enjoying, and using the good. You’re aware of the whole truth.”** – Rick Hanson, *Hardwiring Happiness*

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## Raising Positivity = Happiness Advantage



- When brain is positive:
  - Performs better than negative, neutral, or stressed brain (Happy people solved 20% more word puzzles than unhappy people in one study)
  - Builds a sense of community by lowering defenses and bringing people together – increases the strength of human connections
  - Intelligence rises, creativity rises, energy rises
  - Brain is 31% more productive
  - Dopamine rush makes you happy and **turns on all learning centers in the brain**, allowing you to adapt to the world and see different perspectives (view things as *less stressful*!)

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## Raising Positivity = Happiness Advantage



- Perform each of the following, 2 min/day for 21 days to **rewire your brain** for more positivity
  - 3 gratitudes – *trains the brain to scan for positives*
  - 3 good things – write down 3 things that go well that day and *why* those things happened
  - 3 extra smiles (10:5 rule) – *releases dopamine, improves mood, contagious*
  - Journaling about 1 positive experience in the last 24 hours – *allows your brain to relive it and remember it; lowers levels of worry and pessimism*
  - Exercise – *teaches your brain that your behavior matters, decreases anxiety/worry by 20%!*
  - Meditation – *allows your brain to slow down and focus on the task at hand*
  - Random acts of kindness – *doing good leads to feeling good, ripple effect; first observe, then serve*

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## Previous Thinking on Happiness

Happiness is the reward we get for doing our best

- Work hard at our job = Successful = Happiness
- Work hard at being a parent = Successful = Happiness
- Work hard at our marriage = Successful = Happiness

“New research in psychology and neuroscience shows that it works the other way around: We become more successful *when* we are happier and more positive.” –Shawn Achor, *Happiness Advantage*, p. 15

Happiness → Better Parent → Positive Outcomes

## Tying it All Together

- How does all of this relate to parenting, stress and resilience??



To build **better** futures, we need to build **better, happier, and more positive** brains in children AND in parents

Choosing to stay positive when things get negative helps prevent our brains from “fighting” or “fighting”

## Quick Tips to Remember

- Power of 3s:  
Will \_\_\_ matter in 3 hours? 3 days? 3 months? 3 years?
- Tone of voice influences how our message is received.
- Irritation is an invitation... (e.g. compassion, understanding, slow down and see things differently).
- Remember children (and adults) do things that make sense to them.
- People matter more than problems, projects, and profits.



How we **choose** to **RESPOND** changes everything



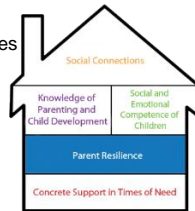


## Parental Resilience



### Key Principles:

- Parenting – when we are not happy and balanced, our parenting suffers. Being a healthy happy person is the beginning of good parenting.
- The way we respond to stress sometimes has a greater impact than the stressor.
- Choose to see the positive.
- Stress impacts our relationships.
- We need to manage stress in healthy ways.



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# Strong Parents, Stable Children: *Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families*

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## Parental Resilience

### *Do Your Best in Times of Stress*

Being a parent is a very rewarding experience, but it can also be very stressful. Parents who can take it in stride when everyday life is stressful and can cope with occasional crises are said to be resilient. Everyone has had a difficult day or times when it feels like nothing is going right: a flat tire on the way to work; a loved one is very ill; the school calls and says your child is behaving badly; the air conditioner stops working on a hot day; or the credit card is maxed out. Some of these can be more easily resolved than others. All parents have inner strengths or other resources that serve as a foundation of resiliency during tough times. Bigger challenges require parents to use their inner strength and be proactive to look for the best solutions for their families. Most can handle everyday hassles, but everyone needs help from time to time. Multiple life stressors, such as a history of abuse or neglect, physical or mental health problems, relationship conflict, substance abuse, domestic violence, financial trouble, unemployment, and homelessness can reduce parents' capacity to cope with everyday stressors of raising children. These are times when parents need extra support seeking help. Using the word "courage" instead of resilience during stressful times or a crisis may help parents see a way to survive and regain their ability to keep on going. When parents take care of themselves during stressful times, their children see a model of how to cope.

Here are some ways you can help:

- The first step in dealing with stress is to identify parents' biggest worries or concerns.
- Have staff who can build and maintain trusting relationships with parents and families.
- Train staff to look for signs of distress in parents and children and develop strategies to reach out to those families.
- Encourage concrete skills to cope with stress, including regular exercise or relaxing activities such as listening to music, meditating, or prayer.
- Talk with parents about developing an action plan in the event of unexpected challenges. For example, identify someone who can provide temporary child care with little notice or build a small savings to take care of minor repairs.
- Provide a list of local resources and services so parents may select what is best for their needs.

Here are some specific questions you can ask:

- What are your dreams for yourself and your family?
- What helps you cope with everyday life?
- How do your strengths help you be a better parent?
- What kinds of frustrations do you deal with during the day?
- How are you able to meet your children's needs when you feel stress?
- How do you and your partner communicate and support each other when one or both of you feels stressed?
- What family members, friends, neighbors, or community services can you look to?
- What are your goals for your family or children in the next week or month?
- What steps can you take to work toward these goals?

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families



## What are My Strengths?

When we hear the word “strengths,” we often think of talents like being athletic, singing, being artistic, or playing a musical instrument. But strengths can also refer to unique qualities, such as kindness, fairness, curiosity, and being a good parent or partner.

Read through the statements below. Mark in the boxes to indicate how well each statement describes you.

	Not like me	A little like me	Quite a bit like me	Exactly like me
1. I am curious about the world.				
2. I enjoy learning new things.				
3. I like to think of new ways to do things.				
4. No matter what the social situation, I am able to fit in.				
5. I am able to look at things and see the big picture.				
6. I have taken frequent stands in the face of strong opposition.				
7. I finish what I start.				
8. I keep my promises.				
9. I have voluntarily helped a friend/neighbor in the last month.				
10. I have people in my life who are as concerned about my feelings and well-being as they are about their own.				
11. I avoid sarcasm and put-downs.				
12. I treat all people equally regardless of who they might be.				
13. I often get people to do things together without nagging.				
14. I control my emotions.				
15. I do not engage in activities that could put me or my children in danger.				
16. I mix work and play as much as possible.				
17. I often say thank you, even for little things.				
18. I look for positives even when things are not going well.				
19. My life has a strong purpose.				
20. I don't hold grudges.				

### Think about it:

- What are some of your other strengths that are not listed?
- How can you use your strengths to help strengthen your relationship with your child(ren)?

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: *Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families*



## Raising Positivity

When we are happy and positive we get along better with others. We are better at seeing things from others' views, we tend to be better parents, and we are better prepared to get through tough times.

**Think about conversations you have had with your children in the past week and answer the following questions:**

What are some positive things you said to your child? How did it make your child feel?

What are some positive things your child said to you? How did it make you feel?

When you said positive things, how did it make you feel about your child and your relationship with him or her?

*Practice being more positive. Try each of the following for 2 minutes a day for 3 weeks:*

- Share 3 things you are thankful for. Talk with those in your home or call, email, or text friends and family to tell them thanks for something they did that helped you or made you feel good.
- Give 3 *extra* smiles.
- Journal about 1 positive experience in the past day.
- Exercise or meditate to help slow down your brain and focus on the task at hand.
- Perform random acts of kindness—doing good makes you feel good!

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families



## Signs of Stress

We know that we have to fill a car's gas tank before the gauge is on empty. The gas gauge is a signal that it's time to stop and get more fuel. As well, when cars hit potholes or curbs, tires get out of alignment and the car has trouble driving straight. A shaky wheel is a signal that alignment is needed. When oil is left unchanged for a long time, it causes other parts of the car to not work and break down. Odd noises under the hood, trouble starting the car, and sometimes smoke are signals that maintenance is needed. Just like a car, our bodies also signal when we need to take care of ourselves. These signals are sometimes called "stress signals." We sometimes experience physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral signs.

**What are some things that happen to you when you are stressed?**

### Physical

- ♦ Headache
- ♦ Body aches
- ♦ Heart pounds and breathe fast
- ♦ Upset stomach
- ♦ Feel very tired
- ♦ Not hungry
- ♦ Want to eat all the time
- ♦ Muscles tighten up

### Emotional/Mental

- ♦ Worry something bad will happen
- ♦ Feel helpless or overwhelmed
- ♦ Feel frustrated
- ♦ Become moody or grouchy
- ♦ Cannot concentrate
- ♦ Think people are disappointed in you
- ♦ Have trouble remembering things
- ♦ Get nervous and can't relax

Other "stress signals" you experience:

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What are some ways your partner and your partner's body responds to stress?

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Feeling stressed is not a bad thing. In fact, sometimes it can push us to do well or do something positive. But, sometimes how we respond to stress can harm us and could hurt others whom we care about. When we feel stressed, the first step in handling our stress is to understand how it makes us feel. Help those you care about, and who care about you, understand your stress signals.

When you start noticing your stress signals use healthy coping strategies to make yourself healthier.

*When you are healthy, your relationship with others will be healthier!*

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: *Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families*



## Managing Stress

When it comes to stress, sometimes we need to take care of ourselves before we can care for others. How we take care of ourselves and react to stress is important. There are many ways to cope with stress. Some are healthy and some are not.

### What are some ways that you deal with stress?

#### HEALTHY

- ◆ Go for a walk or exercising
- ◆ Meditation
- ◆ Read a relaxing book
- ◆ Listen to music
- ◆ Do a favorite hobby
- ◆ Eat just enough healthy food
- ◆ Go to religious services
- ◆ Pray
- ◆ Get enough sleep at night
- ◆ Seek help from a professional
- ◆ Talk to your partner or a close friend
- ◆ Write your concerns down in a journal
- ◆ Think positive thoughts
- ◆ Look for the good in your life

#### UNHEALTHY

- ◆ Yell, shout, scream, or curse
- ◆ Dwell on things that make you angry
- ◆ Smoke
- ◆ Drink
- ◆ Use drugs
- ◆ Hurt yourself or others
- ◆ Eat unhealthy food
- ◆ Eat too much or too little
- ◆ Sleep too much or too little
- ◆ Buy things you do not really need
- ◆ Avoid being with or talking to others
- ◆ Complain a lot to others
- ◆ Take things out on other people
- ◆ Destroy or damage things

List other healthy coping strategies you use:

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List other unhealthy coping strategies you use:

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#### **Make an Action Plan:**

How can you use more healthy coping strategies the next time you feel stressed?

What do you need to help you cope with stress?

Who can you turn to for help when you are stressed?

*When we are healthy, our relationships with others are healthier!*

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: *Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families*



## Goals for Better Health

Many of us want to take better care of ourselves, but it is not always easy. We might not think we have enough time, money, or energy to do things that will help us be healthier. But, if we focus on our strengths and what we already do or have in our lives, we set ourselves on a path to success. Taking steps to live a healthy life starts by first understanding what we already do well and then deciding what else we can do to improve.

**Read through the list below and mark some of the ways you  
already take good care of yourself:**

- ◆ Get enough sleep (not too much, not too little)
- ◆ Keep a regular sleep schedule
- ◆ Eat a variety of healthy foods
- ◆ Rest when my body tells me to
- ◆ Limit alcohol intake
- ◆ Avoid drugs
- ◆ Talk with others when I feel stressed
- ◆ Get regular exercise
- ◆ Spend some quiet time alone each day

What are some other ways you already take good care of yourself?

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What are some ways you would like to take better care of yourself?

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How can you make those changes? Come up with specific goals that you can reach.

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What else might need to change for you to be successful?

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When we share our goals with others, they can check-in from time to time to offer support and encouragement. Who can you turn to for help in reaching your goals?

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*When you take care of yourself it is easier to take care of others!*



# Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families



## Take Care of Yourself

We tend to think of a couple as one unit, but individuals within couples remain just that – individuals. How good or how bad partners feel and how well they care for themselves will affect their relationship. For example, if one partner is under a lot of stress, he or she might not be as patient. Or if one partner had a really good day at work, he or she might be more upbeat. When we handle stress well, it makes us healthier and happier. It also helps us be better able to take good care of others.

What are some things you do to take care of your own needs – to make you feel good?

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What are some hobbies you have that you enjoy doing alone?

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What activities do you do with others that make you feel good?

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What is it about the activities you enjoy (alone or with others) that makes you feel good?

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Activity you want to do:	When can you do it? Are there better or easier times of the day and week to do this?	Is this something you prefer to do alone? Or is it something you can do with others? Who?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

*Stress makes it difficult to pay attention to our needs and the needs of others.  
Take time to care for yourself so you can care for others.  
Put on your own oxygen mask first!*

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: *Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families*



## What Went Well?

When we feel a lot of stress, it can seem like we have very little control over our lives. We tend to be negative and wonder what bad thing will happen next. If we try looking for the good instead, and give ourselves credit for having a positive influence, we will feel more in control and find better ways to solve problems.

Seeing the many good things you do for yourself and others every day is one way to be positive and in control. Before you go to sleep each night, write down two things that went well that day. Next, ask yourself – “How did I make this happen?”

	What went well?	How did I make this happen?
<b>Sunday</b>		
<b>Monday</b>		
<b>Tuesday</b>		
<b>Wednesday</b>		
<b>Thursday</b>		
<b>Friday</b>		
<b>Saturday</b>		

*Learning to think positively about life can help you  
and your relationship with others.*

# Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families



## What Makes Up Well-being: The PERMA Model

Dr. Martin Seligman, one of the leading professors and pioneers in the world of positive psychology, has studied well-being for more than 20 years. He has found that our well-being, or how we are doing, is heavily influenced by five factors that make up the acronym PERMA.

### Positive Emotion

Before we can experience well-being, we need positive emotion. This includes feelings of happiness, peace, love, connectedness, hope, and gratitude. The important part is to enjoy yourself in the moment. These include small, simple things in life like enjoying a bowl of your favorite ice cream, reading a good book, watching your favorite television show, spending time with family and friends, and exercising. Doing fun and enjoyable things is important in life and it makes us feel better inside.

### Engagement

When we lose track of time while doing something we love, we experience “flow”. Time stands still as we focus on the present. Knowing what brings you to a state of flow can enhance your well-being. Look for opportunities to do the things that really fulfill you. This could be playing with your children, reading a good book, playing a musical instrument, or using your talents to create something.

### Relationships

Positive relationships are at the core of our well-being. People who have positive, meaningful relationships with others are happier than those who do not have these close bonds. Think about ways you can strengthen your current relationships or develop new relationships.

### Meaning

Meaning comes from belonging to or participating in a cause that is higher than ourselves. Most of us want to believe we are living and working with a greater purpose. For some this is tied to spirituality or religion; for others it is raising a family, involvement in a charity, or helping humanity in some way.

### Accomplishment/Achievement

Setting our sights on something and dedicating time and attention to better ourselves is good for us. This includes working hard at a skill, achieving a goal, or winning a game or competition. Well-being is tied to the steps we take more than the goal itself.

*Instead of focusing on happiness alone, we can have a much richer, more meaningful life if we focus on these five elements to enhance our well-being.*

## Taking Care of the Parent

Parenting is hard work. There are so many things to take care of. The demands don't stop at night. There is no one else who can easily take over and give you a break. It is hard to know how to deal with some situations. Further, most of us get no training to be parents.

All these challenges can combine to make a person tired and discouraged. They can also make a person irritable and angry. There are several areas that are important to being a good parent, including information (such as books and knowledge), resources (such as a crib, a safe house, and diapers), social system (such as friends and family that you can count on), health (such as energy and well-being), and purpose (such as enjoying parenting and having a strong spiritual life).

**Know your strengths.** As you think about your parenting, consider what strengths you have. Maybe you have lots of good information on caring for children and you have good friends and family members who are glad to help you. It is good to know what your strengths are.

**Know your needs.** We all have needs and limitations as well as strengths. Maybe you do not have a stroller for your baby and your energy has been low. Noticing those needs prepares you to do something about them.

**Get help.** All of us need help. In a job as difficult and important as parenting, most of us need lots of help. Use the strengths you have to help you deal with your needs. Maybe you can call on friends and family members to help you locate a stroller. You may know mothers who can help you understand your health needs. Or maybe friends and family members will take turns helping you with your baby so that you can get out once in a while.

**Make time for your own growth.** In the crunch of parenting it is easy to ignore our own needs. Make time to do things you enjoy. Maybe you can arrange for a neighbor to watch your baby a few minutes every day while you take a nature walk, go to the library, take music lessons, or visit your grandmother. For more ideas on how to find your talents and develop them, see the unit in this series, "Learning and growing: Using your talents."

**Be patient.** There are "seasons of imbalance" in parenting. A baby is generally 3 months to 1 year of age before being ready to sleep through the night. This can be tough on parents! It is why it is so important to know what your strengths are and use them well to deal with the demands of being a parent.

Despite all the challenges of being a parent, most people still choose to have children. The reason is simple. There is nothing quite as amazing and satisfying as watching a human you love grow and develop.

## Applications:

Fill out the chart below. It may be useful to have a partner, friend, or other family member help you so that you don't miss important elements to add to your chart.

Strengths:
Needs:
Ways to get needs met:
Information (such as books and knowledge) For example, what books and knowledge do you already have to help you?
What books and knowledge do you still need?
How can you get the books and knowledge you need? Borrow a book from the library or talk with a friend?
Resources (such as a crib, a safe house, and diapers)
Social system (such as friends and family that you can count on)
Health (such as energy and well-being)
Purpose (such as enjoying parenting and having a strong spiritual life)

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# PRINCIPLES OF Parenting

Taking Care of the Parent:

## Replacing Stress with Peace



In the book *Alexander And The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Alexander has a day when everything goes wrong. He gets gum in his hair, trips on a skateboard, gets scrunched in the car, is deserted by his friends, goes to the dentist, and falls in the mud. At home he is scolded by his mom, gets in trouble with his dad, has lima beans for dinner, gets soap in his eye, and is left alone by the cat.

Have you ever had a day when everything went wrong? Bad days make it hard to be patient and loving. A tired, frustrated, angry person is not likely to be a good parent.

This publication is intended to help you deal with stress so that you can be a more peaceful person and a more effective parent. We suggest that you take the time to do the exercises throughout this publication. That way, you'll be making your personal plan to replace the stress in your life with peace.

## What makes you feel stressed?

Every person has bad days. Sometimes a person has lots of bad days. Think of the things that make you feel stressed. List as many things that cause you stress as you can, especially the ones that bother you most. Make your list as complete as you can.

Maybe your list includes lack of money, whining or nagging children, and loneliness. Having a list of your worries may be useful as you try to deal with them.



## What does stress do to you?

When stress builds up, it can result in anger, headaches, discouragement, depression, stomach-aches, feelings of helplessness, self-hate, and other "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad" feelings.

What are some of the reactions and feelings you have when you get too much stress?

One of the worst effects of stress can be a feeling of helplessness that comes when we feel there is nothing we can do to fix things. When we feel helpless, we may stop trying to solve problems. Then the problems get worse. And we feel worse. Then we get angry or discouraged. We do less. And things keep getting worse. That is a trap!

## STRESSORS:

## STRESS REACTIONS:



## How can you deal with stress?

What can you do to deal with the stresses in your life? There are many things that can help. A first thing is to think about things you love to do. Do you love to sing? Do you love to be alone in nature? Do you love to talk to friends? Do you love to play with your children? Do you love to ex-

ercise? List 20 things you love to do.

Next, ask yourself: "Do I take time in my life for the things I love?" What can you do to make more time for the things you love?

Filling your life with things you love is a first step toward dealing with stress. There are other tools that can help also.



THINGS I LOVE TO DO:

WHAT I CAN DO TO MAKE TIME  
FOR THE THINGS I LOVE:

## Suggestions for dealing with stress:

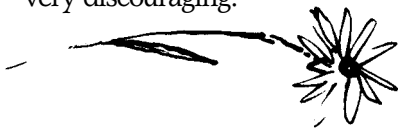
Read over the list below and mark the suggestions that will help you deal with your stress. You can use them to make a personal stress plan.

\_\_\_ 1. Recognize the things that bother you. Becoming aware of your stresses is a first step to dealing with them. It also is part of showing respect for your own feelings.

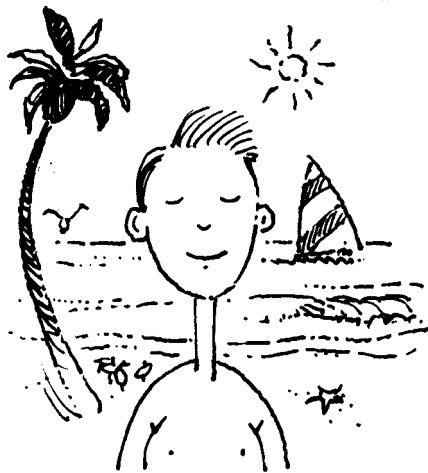
\_\_\_ 2. Recognize that you may not be able to fix everything at once, but there are things you can do that will help. Maybe they are little things. But they make a difference.

\_\_\_ 3. Throw away stresses that you cannot change. For instance, you may worry that an earthquake or tornado is going to destroy you and your family. While it is possible that you could move to a safer house or city, it may be more appropriate to throw away that worry. You may want to close your eyes and mentally tie the tornadoes in a knot and throw them in the trash or lock them in a closet. Decide which of your stresses you cannot change by thinking about them. Then don't think about them.

\_\_\_ 4. Replace stressful thoughts with pleasant ones. Think of it as emotional gardening. You pull the ugly weeds out of your garden, and you cultivate the good plants. Instead of dwelling on a hurt or an injustice, think about someone you like and perhaps about some way you can help that person. A beautiful garden is very satisfying. A garden of weeds can be very discouraging.



\_\_\_ 5. Allow yourself to have vacations from stress. Sometimes we feel so worn-out or frustrated that we want to cry or scream. That's a good time for a mental vacation. Find a place where you can be alone. Lie down, close your eyes, and imagine that you are lying on a beautiful, peaceful beach. Imagine the sun on your face. Listen to the sounds of birds and waves. Feel the warm sand. Breathe deeply and slowly. Enjoy relaxing for several minutes. Then imagine yourself jogging, swimming, shopping, or anything you would enjoy doing on your vacation. When you are feeling better, open your eyes. Think of some small thing you can do to make things run more smoothly.



\_\_\_ 6. Use your sense of humor. When I start to get frustrated and angry with my children, I hold a training session. For example, when the children have left lights on throughout the house, I may feel like screaming at them. Instead, I call them together and tell them that a crime has been committed. Someone has sneaked into the house and turned on all our lights. I suspect it may be an elephant. Maybe we could all hunt through the house looking for the elephant—and turn off lights. I am very careful to avoid sarcasm or hurt. I make my statements ridiculous so that everyone starts laughing, including me.



\_\_\_ 7. Be sure you are keeping yourself strong. Are you eating well? Do you regularly get some exercise or relaxation? Make time in your schedule to keep yourself physically fit. For child care, you might take turns with a friend. Today you watch her children for an hour or two while she takes a break. Tomorrow she watches yours while you take a break.

\_\_\_ 8. Draw strength from friends and family members. You may have some friends who help you make decisions, feel loved, and feel hopeful. Call them. Ask them if they will listen to you. Talk to them. Tell them how you feel. You may have some friends or family members who make you angrier or sadder. It might be good not to talk to them when you feel stressed. Anger makes stress worse.

\_\_\_ 9. Focus on things you love to do. Go back to the list you made, and pick out some of the things you love to do most. Make time for them. Set aside money to do them. Ask people to help you do them.

\_\_\_\_ 10. Anticipate problems and solve them. Deal with them. For example, maybe your toddler loves to play with the stereo, and that bothers you. Put the stereo up out of reach. Put interesting and safe toys where the children can play with them. Baby-proof your home. Make a special play area for your children. Prevent the troubles that drive you crazy by planning ahead.

\_\_\_\_ 11. When you are feeling tired and discouraged and don't want to do anything, look for a little job. Maybe you could wipe off the cabinets. Maybe you could take out the trash. Look for a little job to get started. Once you finish the little job, give yourself credit for it. Don't beat yourself up with a long list of all the things you still need to do. Once you get started with a little job, you may feel like tackling bigger jobs.



\_\_\_\_ 12. Deal with rejection. One powerful stress for most people is the feeling that no one cares. Maybe when you talk to your mother she only preaches to you. Maybe your husband or wife doesn't understand you or show respect for your feelings. Some researchers now tell us that the healthiest people are not necessarily those who had perfect childhoods but those who have made peace with their childhoods. Maybe Mom was not nice and maybe Dad deserted the family. But healthy people don't stay angry and upset with the

past. They accept what has happened, and they live in the present. They accept what their parents have done and can do for them. They build good friendships.

\_\_\_\_ 13. Get outside yourself. Sometimes we worry so much about our problems that we can't see anything else. It may help to take some cookies to the neighbor, to volunteer some time for a church or community group. You don't need a lot of extra demands. But taking a little time to help others can bring peace and satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_ 14. Be creative. Organize to solve problems. Look for good solutions. For example, if your children are always cross by dinner-time, maybe you could provide them with a healthy afternoon treat. Or you could eat dinner earlier.

\_\_\_\_ 15. Get help if you need it. If you begin to feel overwhelmed—especially if you feel suicidal—get help! Go to your minister or mental health clinic. Everyone gets discouraged from time to time. But if those feelings become severe, get help.

\_\_\_\_ 16. Be patient. Some problems solve themselves with time. Eventually children outgrow diapers. They get past teething. The rain stops and the sun comes out. Work on the things you can change. Be patient with things that take time.

\_\_\_\_ 17. Be a friend to yourself. Don't expect yourself to be perfect. Stop doing things that tear you down. Notice the good things you do, and dwell on those things. Don't try to force yourself to be perfect or always kind. Treat your feelings with respect. Other people may sound bigger and stronger and more sure of themselves. But your feelings are important. Listen to them. Instead of dwelling on a mistake, learn what you can from it and

then let the mistake go. Examine the expectations you have for yourself. Check to be sure they are reasonable.

\_\_\_\_ 18. Take control of your life. Helplessness is a terrible feeling. While you may not be able to change everything, notice the things you can change.



\_\_\_\_ 19. Discover meaning in your life. Some people find meaning through religion, some through learning, some through service. Enjoy the contribution you make. See the purpose of people doing good.

\_\_\_\_ 20. Don't compare yourself to others. Your sister may be a wonderful cook. Your neighbor may be incredibly organized. But don't compare yourself to them. No one has every talent. Discover your talents. Enjoy them. Use them to help others.

\_\_\_\_ 21. Can you think of other ways you can deal with stress? If so, list them.

**OTHERS :**

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## Make a stress plan.

As you have read over this list of ideas, have you marked those that seem helpful to you? Then you are ready to pick one of your stresses and come up with a plan for dealing with it. Don't plan how to deal with all of your stresses. Just start with one. The stress that I am going to start with is:

What I plan to do to prevent or deal with that stress: (Pick something from the list or use your own ideas.)

Do I need to involve others in helping me with my plan? How will I involve them?

What is my goal? How do I hope to change things?

After you have tried out your plan, see how well it works. Praise yourself for your success. Plan how to be successful in dealing with other stresses. You may want to keep this publication handy to remind you of ways to deal with stress.

As you make room in your life for things you love and replace stressful feelings with feelings of peace and calmness, you will find your personal and family life more satisfying. You are likely to find that you are more successful in your work, more effective with your children, and more at peace with yourself.

### If you want to learn more . . .

Newman, Mildred, and Berkowitz, Bernard (1971). *How To Be Your Own Best Friend*. New York: Ballantine Books.

### Just for fun . . .

Viorst, Judith (1972). *Alexander And The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. Hartford, Conn.: Atheneum.



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