

child using drugs, etc.) happen to me?," replace it with, "Things happen. I may not deserve them. I may feel bad. But I can handle them."

If things get out of hand, leave the room for a few minutes to calm down. Never take it out on your children! You can deal more effectively with them when you have time to collect your thoughts.



Keep in touch!

Relatives and friends are great for reducing stress. Not only can a friend be a great listener, but the sheer fun of being with someone you enjoy can reduce tension.

Seek outside help!

If things get too tense, help is available. Talk to your spouse or friends about the problem. Even in rural counties, groups like the Department of Family and Children Services, the Health Department, the Child Abuse Council, church groups, community mental health counselors, and your child's school counselors can help you get a handle on your stress.

Putting Knowledge to Work



When you have a question, call or visit your local office of The University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service.

You'll find a friendly, well-trained staff ready to help you with information, advice, and free publications covering agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development.

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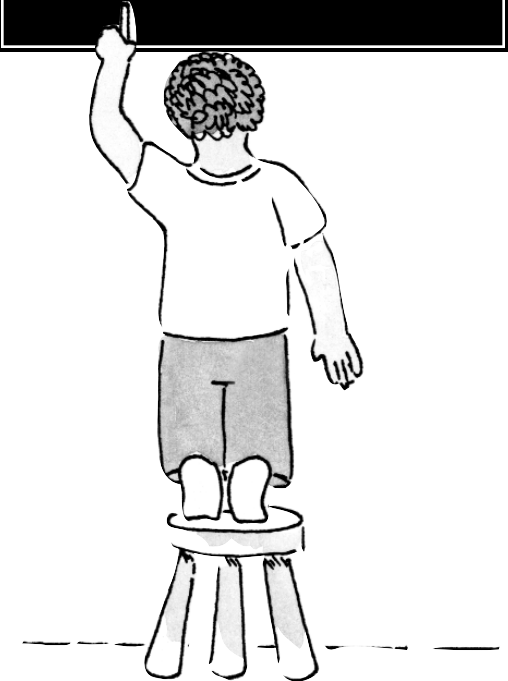
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GALE A. BUCHANAN, DEAN & DIRECTOR

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Parents and Stress



The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

College of Family and Consumer Sciences
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Parents and Stress

Raising happy, well-adjusted children is quite an accomplishment for any parent. Knowing that you are effective with your children and can meet their needs can be its own reward.

Hard work, responsibility, and demands for time and attention are all a part of parenting. This is the part of parenting that causes stress to build and causes us to feel weighed down.

When the pressures of parenting get too great, they can cause us to respond inappropriately. Sometimes we put pressures on ourselves because we try to run a tight ship. When you feel stressed, ask yourself:

- Do I expect too much? Do the kids always have to have clean rooms, stay quiet, or obey immediately?
- Do I expect things to be done my way? Can they do it their way sometimes?
- Do they always have to act like adults? Can I let them be children?
- Have I talked to anyone about my feelings?

What can you do to reduce stress?

Get organized!

Being organized can help you focus your time and energy and can prevent little hassles that add to your stress.

- Decide on the really important tasks, and make a list of the ones that need to be done today. Break big jobs down into smaller ones, and let the children help with some.
- Create a message center with a calendar, message board, and phone list so the family stays on top of appointments and events.
- Give your children responsibility for tasks around the house that are appropriate for their abilities.
- Plan your morning the night before. Set out your outfit and put your keys, wallet or purse, and money in the same place. Make lunches the night before.



Take Care of Yourself!

Some parents give, give, give to others but lack the ability to receive. Sooner or later they end up feeling used and abused. Then, the parent may nag or complain. The result? She feels bad about herself, and the stress piles higher and higher. It's a vicious cycle.

Take care of yourself by eating right. Eat fruits and vegetables, and drink lots of water. Try to avoid too much fat and sugar.

Get regular exercise. This takes a little planning and time, but you will see the rewards when you start to have more energy and are in a better mood!

Get enough rest. Try to set a regular bedtime that allows you seven to eight hours of sleep. Relax at other times during the day, even if it's just for a few minutes.

Try to keep from getting sick. At work, be especially careful. Germs pass easily from one person to another, so wash your hands often with warm water and soap, especially before eating. Teach your children to wash their hands and faces often, too, so that they don't get sick.

Value yourself!

Do any of these statements sound familiar?

- I'm so lazy.
- I'm never patient enough.
- I'm just not a very good parent.

Thoughts like these hurt. They actually make it harder for you to be a parent: they cause stress, and most of the time they are not true.

Instead of sending negative messages to yourself when something goes wrong, send a positive one to help you work through a bad time or help you to change. For instance:

When you think, "I'm a bad parent. I made a mistake," **replace it with**, "I learned from this situation."

When you think, "I can't let my child see me (sad, angry, frustrated...)," **replace it with**, "My child will learn from knowing me as I am."

When you think, "I can't change the way I am," **replace it with**, "I can change—one step at a time."

When you think, "I feel awful. Why did life let this (divorce, child with special needs,