

Self-Care Tips for Stressed Parents

This guide is intended to address the stresses faced by parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, including juggling work and childcare or school, coping with uncertainty, and finding ways to protect well-being. These tips are offered as simple reminders of ways to care for yourself so that you can care for others. While not every tip works for everybody, some may be helpful for you.

Emotions and What to Do With Them	
<p>It's important to know...</p> <p>Emotions can be helpful signals. It's important to recognize what you're feeling to help you respond.</p> <p>Feeling worried, sad, or angry are common emotions right now, for adults and children. These feelings can also show up as sleep problems, low energy, trouble concentrating, tense muscles, or problems making decisions.</p> <p>Parents can sometimes neglect their own feelings when caring for others. These tips can help you take care of your own emotions, and respond to emotions in your family.</p>	<p>You can try to...</p> <p>Give feelings a name, for yourself and others. To yourself: "I'm feeling worried right now." To your child: "It sounds like you're feeling angry."</p> <p>Accept feelings as understandable. To yourself: "It makes sense that I'm feeling worried." To your child: "It's normal to feel angry when you're told no."</p> <p>Remind yourself that uncomfortable feelings pass.</p> <p>Reassure yourself that no one is a perfect parent, especially during times of stress.</p>
Keep your Emotions Healthy: Self-Care and Connection	
<p>It's important to know...</p> <p>Self-care is not just a special treat, it is a part of keeping your mind and body healthy.</p> <p>Protecting short periods of time to take care of yourself allows you to care for others.</p> <p>Even in hard times, there can be positive moments to enjoy on your own or connect with others.</p> <p>If you get off-track or lose your temper, try to apologize and move forward.</p>	<p>You can try to...</p> <p>Focus on the basics: are you getting enough sleep, exercise, food, water?</p> <p>Develop and follow daily routines. Set reminders for self-care.</p> <p>Save room for focused time with family, even just five minutes of one-on-one time a day, such as eating a meal together or playing a game.</p> <p>Express gratitude and pay attention to positive moments. Keep a journal, take a picture, send a nice message.</p>
When You Get Distracted: Maintaining Focus	
<p>It's important to know...</p> <p>Interruptions are common for parents right now, especially when working at home.</p> <p>It can be easy to become distracted by news and social media.</p> <p>Stress can make it harder to work for long stretches of time. During a pandemic, you may not be able to work as efficiently, and may need different kinds of support.</p>	<p>You can try to...</p> <p>Write to-do lists and use reminders.</p> <p>Break big tasks or goals into smaller ones. Do only one thing at a time when possible.</p> <p>Set timers to limit media consumption; turn off notifications to reduce distraction.</p> <p>Reward yourself for completing tasks, e.g., take a break, try something new, call or text a friend.</p>



When things get tough: Emotional “First Aid Kit” for Parents

Sometimes emotions can feel overwhelming. Depending on how you’re feeling, these suggestions might help make emotions feel more manageable.

When you feel stress or worry, try soothing activities:

Focus on comforting sensations (soft clothing, calming scents), prayer or meditation, close your eyes and remember a favorite time or place, enjoy a favorite treat, read for pleasure, take a nap, cuddle or play with a pet.

When you feel sad or exhausted, try to build energy:

Go for a walk or other exercise, spend time outdoors, listen to a favorite upbeat song, complete a small task and celebrate that progress, watch a funny or cute video.

When you feel upset or out of control, try to cool off:

Splash cold water on your face or hands, take slow deep breaths, take a short break by yourself.

When you feel confused or overwhelmed, try to stay focused:

Focus your attention on what you can control, rather than trying to plan for unknowns. Talk to others who build your confidence or can help you problem-solve.

When you feel angry or disappointed, try kindness and compassion:

Show kindness toward yourself for doing your best; show kindness and generosity toward others. Assume that most everyone is trying their best, even if you disagree with their choices.

