

Got Parenting Stress?

Handout

Presented By:
Eliane Herdani, MS, LCPC



Sponsored by NIH Child Care Board & ORS/
Division of Amenities and Transportation Services

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Balance Defined

Balance involves finding the allocation of time and energy that fits your values and needs, making conscious choices about how to structure your life, and integrating inner needs and outer demands.

Parents (and parent figures) matter!

Research documents that family relationships matter

1. Children with positive caring relationships with their parents are more likely to avoid risks.
2. Positive and supportive relationships with caring adults are critical to child and youth development
3. There are a wide variety of benefits *to adults* of positive relationships with their children

Ellen Galinsky

- Interviewed 1000 children (grade 4-12)
- Question posed to children:
What is one thing you would change about your parents' work?
- *What do you think they said?*

Ellen Galinsky

Kids did not request more time with their parents;

They wanted the time they spent with their parents to be with less stressed parents.

What are the implications for Stress Management?

**Eight Critical Parenting Skills –
Ellen Galinsky**

- Making the child feel loved and important.
- Responding to the child's cues & clues.
- Accepting the child for who s/he is but expecting success.
- Promoting strong values.
- Using constructive discipline.
- Providing routines and rituals.
- Being involved in your child's education.
- Being there for your child.

**HOW CAN YOU DO
ALL OF THIS
AND
MANAGE STRESS?**

Strategies

- Manage expectations
- Set goals
- Prioritize
- Delegate
- Set limits
- Organize your day/week
- Model and teach problem solving skills
- Stay resilient

Manage Expectations

- Does the high level of achievement require more time and energy than you like or can do comfortably?
- Will it make a difference in a year or two?
- Does the level of expectation negatively affect others?
- Is there a lesser expectation that would be satisfying and still meet the need?

Set Goals

- What are 10 things you want for your family?
- What are 10 things you want for yourself?

Prioritize

- Identify goals
- Be realistic about time, energy, and unpredictable events

Delegate

- Give the task to the **right person**
- Provide necessary **support**
- Focus on **desired outcome** rather than process
- Give clear and accurate **instructions** of what you expect
- Assign tasks by **requesting**, not ordering
- Give **credit**
- Be **respectful** and courteous

Delegation at Home

- **Family Meeting Model**
- Determine what needs to be done; **Make a list**
- **Who can help** (age appropriate)?
- Assign or choose from list
- **Write it down**
- Break tasks down into **components**; **Define task**
- Example: “Clean your room.”
- **Ask** for help in positive way
- **Follow-up**
- **Adjust your standards**; Give up perfectionism.
- **Express appreciation**

Set Limits

- To serve as **role models** for colleagues, employees and our families;
- To be **more balanced**; maximize our potential
- To **focus energy** where it can be best utilized
- To **avoid stress**
 - Being overwhelmed and overtired leads to burnout

Organize Your Day

- Schedule tasks you have to do as well as tasks you want to do
- What can be done the night before?
- Organizing can be very different for different people

**Making the Holiday
Season Stress Free**

- Plan ahead and be organized.
- Focus on the positive and not the negative.
- Take care of yourself.
- Plan some time to be alone.
- Remember the true meanings of the holidays.
- Be prepared for holiday family interactions.
- Plan ahead for the post-holiday slump.

**Model & Teach Problem Solving
Skills**

- Talk about the child's feelings & needs.
- Talk about your feelings & needs (briefly).
- Brainstorm together to find mutually agreeable options.
- Write down all ideas without evaluating.
- Decide which suggestion(s) to try.
- Re-evaluate.

Faber and Mazlish

Avoid Faulty Thinking

- I must be perfect all of the time
 - My children must be perfect at all times
- I can have it "all"
- "The grass is greener"
- I must eliminate all stress
- I will be in control all of the time

Anticipate

- Holiday schedules and activities
- School calendars – summer, spring break
- Important milestones – entering middle school, high school graduation, preschool readiness

Stay Resilient

1. Make connections.
2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.
3. Accept that change is a part of living.
4. Move toward your goals.
5. Take decisive actions.
6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.
7. Nurture a positive view of yourself.
8. Keep things in perspective.
9. Maintain a hopeful outlook.
10. Take care of yourself.

Manage Your Energy

- **Physical energy is the fundamental source of fuel.**
–If you do not have physical energy, you won't have adequate emotional and mental energy.
- **Imperative** = eat right, get enough rest and exercise regularly.
- **Making that commitment** will give your body and mind the best kind of energy.

Parenting Resources

There are 3 key sources for becoming the parent *you* want to be:

- Gathering information from *others* (“experts”, friends, other parents);
- *Yourself* (utilizing your own *life experiences*, remembering what it was like for you as a child); and,
- *Your child* (observing and interacting with your child)

**Office of Research Services
(ORS) Resources**

ORS/ Division of Amenities and Transportation Services

•NIH Child Care Programs
<http://does.ors.od.nih.gov/childcare/index.htm>

•Focus on You- NIH Wellness
<http://dats.ors.od.nih.gov/wellness/index.htm>

•Balances Choices of a Healthy Lifestyle
<http://does.ors.od.nih.gov/food/balancedChoices.htm>

•NIH Child Care Resource & Referral Service
1-800-777-1720

ORS/Division of Health and Safety

•Employee Assistance Program
<http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/eap/>

•Nursing Mothers Program
<http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/lactation.htm>

Thank You

Please take a moment to complete the evaluation form provided, your input is appreciated.

POSSIBLE STRESS INDICATORS

Circle the symptoms you have experienced within past month

EMOTIONAL SIGNS

anxiety anger fear helplessness hopelessness victimized
misunderstood flash backs grief guilt emotional outbursts numb
despair depression suicidal thoughts agitation sleep disturbance impulsive
irritated often mood swings wandering or racing thoughts feeling down

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

relationship problems withdrawing excessive humor or sarcasm excessive silence
suspicion change in activity erratic work behavior weight change increase alcohol
increase tobacco violent rages avoid places or things panic attacks
hyperactive accident prone clearing throat often clenching hands crying a lot
driving recklessly using drugs more often (prescription and over counter) drumming fingers
forgetting things grinding teeth nervous laughing overeating sexual problems
sleep problems stuttering more tapping foot

COGNITIVE SIGNS

confusion poor concentration memory loss disruption of logic nightmares
blame exaggerated startle shattered security

PHYSICAL SIGNS

head or backaches chest pain high blood pressure rash or acne
shortness of breath exhaustion nausea vomiting tremors sweats or chills
diarrhea dry mouth fatigue insomnia ulcers joint aches or pains
increased infections hard bowel movements dizziness eyestrain heart pounding
missed periods muscle tension nervous tics sleep too much urinating often
weakness stomach pains

Excerpt from Galinsky, ASK THE CHILDREN: What America's Children Really Think About Working Parents. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999.

Eight Critical Parenting Skills

- 1. Making the child feel important and loved.**
- 2. Responding o the child's cues and clues.**
- 3. Accepting the child for who he/she is but expecting success.**
- 4. Promoting strong values.**
- 5. Using constructive discipline.**
- 6. Providing routines and rituals.**
- 7. Being involved in the child's education.**
- 8. Being there for your child. (Illness and important events)**

**Excerpt from: Friel, John, Ph.D. and Friel, Linda, MA,
The 7 Worst Things Parents Do**

The 7 Worst Things Parents Do:

- Mistake 1: Putting Your Marriage Last
- Mistake 2: Babying Your Child
 - Balance Between Preparing and Protecting
- Mistake 3: Failing to Give Your Child Structure
- Mistake 4: Being Your Child's Best Friend
- Mistake 5: Pushing Your Child Into Too Many Activities
- Mistake 6: Expecting Your Child to Fulfill Your Dreams
- Mistake 7: Ignoring Your Emotional and/or Spiritual Life

**Excerpt from: Covey, Stephen R. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families.
New York: Golden Books, 1997.**

Seven Habits:

- Habit 1: Be Proactive
 - Becoming and Agent of Change in Your Family
- Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind
 - Developing a Family Mission Statement
- Habit 3: Put First Things First
 - Making Family a Priority in a Turbulent World
- Habit 4: Think "Win-Win"
 - Moving from "Me" to "We"
- Habit 5: Seek First to Understand...Then to Be Understood
 - Solving Family Problems Through Empathic Communication
- Habit 6: Synergize
 - Building Family Unity Through Celebrating Differences
- Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw
 - Renewing the Family Spirit Through Traditions

Chores and Tasks That Your Child Can Do

Adapted from: Shaevitz, Marjorie, The Superwoman Syndrome, Warner Books

3-4 years of age

(Children of this age need lots of reminders and guidance)

- **Dress self (Put on pants, socks, shoes, sweater, shirt)**
- **Pick up and put away toys**
- **Empty wastebaskets**
- **Help set table, clear dishes**
- **Put dirty clothes in hamper**
- **Close drawers in room**

5-6 years of age

(Continue to guide and remind)

- **Set and clear table**
- **Feed pet**
- **Help put away groceries**
- **Dust**
- **Put away games, toys, clothes**
- **Take out trash**
- **Water plants**
- **Assist in meal preparation**
- **Make bed**
- **Clean out pet box, cage, etc.**

7-8 years of age

- **Sweep floors, walks**
- **Help with grocery shopping**
- **Rake leaves; help with yard work**
- **Walk dog**
- **Polish shoes**
- **Vacuum**
- **Wash, dry and put away dishes**
- **Fill and empty dishwasher**
- **Help with parties, meals**

9-10 years of age

- **Wash car**
- **Prepare simple meals**
- **Bathe dog**
- **Use washer/dryer with directions**
- **Fold and put away clean clothes/laundry**
- **Put out trash for garbage collector**
- **Water yard or plants**
- **Straighten up rooms**
- **Paint**
- **Clean and organize drawers, closets**
- **Clean up bathroom**

12 and over

(Children over 12 need and want to feel independent. Whenever possible, encourage your children to select tasks and choose the time when they will do them. Rotate unpleasant tasks.)

- **Shovel snow and mow lawn**
- **Iron**
- **Do laundry, wash clothes by hand if necessary**
- **Wash floors, windows**
- **Purchase own clothing (allow more independence as child grows)**
- **Run errands**
- **Clean refrigerator**
- **Clean own room thoroughly (dust, vacuum, straighten up, change bed linens)**
- **Plan menus, prepare and serve meals**
- **Replace light bulbs**
- **Baby-sit for younger siblings**
- **Clean basement, closets, garage, etc.**

RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN THROUGH FAMILY MEETINGS

Eva W. Maiden, M.A.

Marriage, Family and Child Counselor

Purpose of Family Meetings

- For children to participate in the life of the family, expressing their ideas and listening to those of their parents;
- To learn decision making in areas that parents believe can be negotiated;
- To improve organization of household;
- To provide a forum for communication about special situations;

Underlying Attitudes

- Feelings are valid;
- Different people have different perceptions; this is to be respected whatever their age;
- Comments about “how things are going” are appropriate – blaming is not;
- Tone is businesslike and serious (sometimes it can be fun, too);

Necessary Conditions

- Regular meeting time;
- Agenda
- Chairperson
- One person speaks at a time;
- Talk coolly on hot topics possible; table if there is too much heat or an impasse;
- Stick to a time limit;

Roads to Success

- Leader holds attention – even of the most distractible family member;
- Leader helps most emotional family member stay in “business mode;”
- Leader elicits ideas from the quietest or least powerful family member;
- Keep asking for cooperation
- Keep noting and highlighting areas of agreement and reaching for more agreement;
- Try for consensus; use voting only after attempts at consensus have failed;

Language for Meetings

- Use I statements (I messages)
“I feel...”
“I would like us...”
- Avoid YOU statements (blaming/accusing)
- For criticism, use:
“How are things going?”
“How are we doing?”
“Let’s review the agreements we made.”
“We’re not on target...”
- For problem solving use brainstorming
“Does anyone have any ideas for this?”
- End on a positive note
“We got a lot done today.”
“We look at some tough questions today.”

Setting Limits and Delegating Exercise

- “I have too much on my plate.”
 - “I would like to get the following tasks off my plate....”

Limit Setting Recipe

How To Say “NO”

Pause. Ask For Time

Recipe:

- 2 positive statements
 - 1 limit statement
 - 1 positive statement to close
- or
- 1 alternative to keep options open

Ways to De-Stress Holidays with Young Children:

Be healthy:

- ✳ Keep bedtimes and other routines consistent and predictable. Humans need more rest during these shortest days of the year than at any other; insufficient rest can lead to holiday colds and fevers.
- ✳ Keep meals and snacks as healthy as possible; emphasize vegetables and fruits to balance holiday treats.
- ✳ Get outdoors with your child every day, even if only for a short walk.

Be available:

- ✳ Schedule your leave time from work for two days more than what you think you'll need.
- ✳ Consider giving your child several days of time with you as their primary holiday gift, rather than expensive toys.
- ✳ Plan for visits involving long-distance travel to happen after January 1st, when airfares are lower and tempers are slower. Even car trips can add major stress to holidays.
- ✳ Ask grandparents to visit your family, instead of your visiting them.
- ✳ Shop for gifts online.

Be relaxed:

- ✳ Have visiting relatives stay at a nearby hotel, so both you and they can have some down time.
- ✳ Consider having “dress-down” holiday meals at home; serve prepared foods from grocers (most stores take special orders for holiday meals).
- ✳ Purchase *comfortable* dress up clothing for you and your children to wear to formal family, community, and religious events.

Have fun:

- ✳ Board games ... pillow fights ... sledding ... making popcorn. Fun family times happen when there's plenty of unscheduled time and no distractions from the outside.
- ✳ Balance child time with adult time, making sure you have time with your partner to meet your needs as a couple.

Manage Your Energy - Worksheet

Where is my impact?

Consider those with whom you have contact on a daily basis. Consider your roles at home and at work - spouse, friend, son/daughter, parent, supervisor, consultant, sales, customer service, educator, etc. Where is your greatest impact? What group of people can you energize the most?

List below the top 3 areas/people in your life, that your energy can impact the most.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Consider Your Purpose

Purpose is a unique source of energy and power. It fuels your focus, direction, passion and perseverance. To get a quick sense of the power of your purpose, answer the following questions:

1. How excited are you to get to work each morning?
(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

2. How much do you enjoy what you do for its own sake, rather than for what it gets you?
(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

3. How accountable do you hold yourself to a deeply held set of values?
(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high)

Now total your responses. If your total is 27 or higher, that suggests that you already bring a significant sense of purpose to what you do. If your total is 22 or below, you may just be going through the motions. Only you can determine if you are actively using your life as a vehicle to express your deepest values.

10 Strategies for Managing Your Physical Energy

Consider the strategies below for managing physical energy. Put a star next to the items you currently do well; circle the items you do "sometimes" but not regularly. Assess your areas for improvement.

1. Go to bed early and wake up early
2. Go to sleep and wake up consistently at the same times
3. Eat five to six small meals daily
4. Eat breakfast every day
5. Eat a balanced healthy diet
6. Minimize simple sugars
7. Drink 48 to 64 ounces of water daily
8. Take breaks every ninety minutes during work
9. Get some physical activity daily
10. Do at least two cardiovascular interval workouts and two strength-training workouts a week

9 Steps to Balancing Your Energy

Below are 9 steps for balancing energy. This is your opportunity to personalize these steps.

1. Change Eating Habits. One habit I could change is: _____.
2. Balance Recovery Time. For recovery time, I most enjoy: _____.
3. Create Rituals. A current ritual I have (or need to have) is: _____.
4. Be Positive. Next time I speak to _____ (name) or think about _____ (situation), I will remain positive.
5. Stop Multi-tasking. One area where I can slow down is: _____.
6. Know What Matters Most. What matters most to me is: _____.
7. Focus on What Matters Most. I can remember what matters most everyday by _____.
8. Beat "Energy Vampires" One energy vampire I have is: _____.
9. Use Your Stress. My stress positively impacts me by _____.

Make One Commitment to Yourself!

Before leaving today make one commitment to yourself. You may decide to focus on a physical energy strategy or a balancing strategy. Complete the following sentences.

My specific area of focus will be _____. This is realistic for me to accomplish because _____. I will monitor my progress by _____. My plan to achieve this is to _____ through _____ (date).

How Resilient Are You?¹

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly	
1	2	3	4	5	In a crisis or chaotic situation, I calm myself and focus on taking useful actions.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm usually optimistic. I see difficulties as temporary and expect to overcome them.
1	2	3	4	5	I can tolerate high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty about situations.
1	2	3	4	5	I adapt quickly to new developments. I'm good at bouncing back from difficulties.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm playful. I find the humor in rough situations, and can laugh at myself.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm able to recover emotionally from losses and setbacks. I have friends I can talk with. I can express my feelings to others and ask for help. Feelings of anger, loss and discouragement don't last long.
1	2	3	4	5	I feel self-confident, appreciate myself and have a healthy concept of who I am.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm curious. I ask questions. I want to know how things work. I like to try new ways of doing things.
1	2	3	4	5	I learn valuable lessons from my experiences and from the experiences of others.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm good at solving problems. I can use analytical logic, be creative, or use practical common sense.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm good at making things work well. I'm often asked to lead groups and projects.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm very flexible. I feel comfortable with my paradoxical complexity. I'm optimistic and pessimistic, trusting and cautious, unselfish and selfish, and so forth.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm always myself, but I've noticed that I'm different in different situations.
1	2	3	4	5	I prefer to work without a written job description. I'm more effective when I'm free to do what I think is best in each situation.
1	2	3	4	5	I "read" people well and trust my intuition.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm a good listener. I have good empathy skills.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm non-judgmental about others and adapt to people's different personality styles.
1	2	3	4	5	I'm very durable. I hold up well during tough times. I have an independent spirit underneath my cooperative way of working with others.
1	2	3	4	5	I've been made stronger and better by difficult experiences.
1	2	3	4	5	I've converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences.

Total Score: _____

Interpretation

80 or higher very resilient!

65-80 better than most

50-65 slow, but adequate

40-50 you're struggling

40 or under seek help!

¹ By Al Siebert, PhD, author of *The Resiliency Advantage*. See www.resiliencycenter.com/resiliencyquiz.shtml

Resilient Mindset Quiz²

Are You A Parent Capable of Fostering Resilience?

1. My child leaves a favorite toy outside overnight. Though I've repeatedly reminded my child that the toy might "disappear" if left out, my reminders were not heeded. The next morning, the toy is gone and my child is crying. I would:

- a) Tell my child, "I told you so."
- b) Begin by empathizing with their unhappiness and saying, "I know you're upset that the toy is gone."
- c) Punish them.
- d) Buy them another toy.

2. When my child disagrees with me, it often appears that her goal is to make me angry or seek revenge. She will scream and yell and tell me that I'm not a good mother. When this happens, I should:

- a) Ignore her anger.
- b) Punish her more severely so she learns how to behave appropriately more quickly.
- c) Allow her to rant and rave until she runs out of steam.
- d) Acknowledge her anger but not change my plan.

3. Which of these statements is true?

- a) All children are basically the same when it comes to discipline and therefore discipline practices should be applied equally.
- b) Changing my approach will spoil my child.
- c) Our children should be more appreciative of our hard work and parental effort.
- d) Just because a particularly strategy worked with me when I was a child does not mean it will be effective with my child.

4. In problem situations between parents and a child, the initial responsibility for change falls upon:

- a) Parents
- b) The child
- c) Both parties
- d) The counselor

5. Which of the following will help children feel loved, special and appreciated:?

- a) Creating traditions and special times with them.
- b) Making certain to not miss significant events.
- c) Accepting your children for who they are, not what you want them to be.
- d) All of the above.

6. What is the best way to deal with mistakes:

- a) Serve as a model for dealing with mistakes and setbacks.
- b) Teach your children that mistakes are to be avoided.
- c) Lower your expectations so that your children will never make mistakes.
- d) Ignore them.

² www.raisingresilientkids.com/quiz/index.html

7. Your child tells you that he feels ugly and dumb. Your first response should be:

- a) "But, you're not ugly and dumb."
- b) "I know you feel that way. I'm not certain why you do but maybe we can figure out what will help you feel better."
- c) "If you keep feeling that way, no one will want to be with you."
- d) "I really get upset when you say those things."

8. Which of these statements are true?

- a) Spanking is one of the most effective consequences to develop self-discipline.
- b) Children who are spanked more often have been found to become more cooperative with their peers.
- c) Spanking as a form of punishment develops problem-solving skills in children.
- d) Children who are spanked have been found to become more aggressive with other children.

9. When your children are successful at a task, you can reinforce a resilient mindset by saying:

- a) "I'm glad I was here to help you since you would not have been able to do it on your own."
- b) "It was great to see how you figured that out."
- c) "Now that you see you can succeed, you shouldn't make excuses for not trying something in the future."
- d) All of the above.

10. At an early age it is important for parents to:

- a) Provide opportunities for children to help others.
- b) Involve them in making age-appropriate choices.
- c) Use time-out as the main form of discipline.
- d) All of the above.
- e) a and b

Explanation of Correct Quiz Answers:

1. My child leaves a favorite toy outside overnight. Though I've repeatedly reminded my child that the toy might "disappear" if left out, my reminders were not heeded. The next morning, the toy is gone and my child is crying. I would:

b. Begin by empathizing with their unhappiness and saying, "I know you're upset that the toy is gone."

The ability to see the world through your children's eyes and be empathic is essential for fostering resilience. You don't have to agree with everything they do but try to appreciate and validate their point of view as a bridge to begin every communication and as a foundation for them to listen and learn from you. In this instance, saying to your child, "I know that you're upset that the toy is gone" is an empathic statement that is not judgmental or accusatory, thereby lessening the probability that your child will become defensive. Telling them "I told you so" or punishing them is likely to lead to anger and resentment rather than learning. Buying them a new toy is also counterproductive since it does not permit them to experience the consequences of their behavior. If children do not realize that there are consequences to their actions, they will have difficulty developing self-discipline which is a major component of a resilient mindset.

2. When my child disagrees with me, it often appears that her goal is to make me angry or seek revenge. She will scream and yell and tell me that I'm not a good mother. When this happens, I should:

d. Acknowledge her anger but not change my plan.

When you interact with your children you should always consider whether you are saying things in a way that will allow them to be receptive to listening to you. If you interrupt, put them down, tell them how they should be feeling or use absolutes such as always or never in a critical way they are likely to become angry and tune you out. Begin by communicating that you hear what they are saying but then explain why their behavior will not alter your actions. In this example, you can say to your child in a calm voice that you know she is angry, but her yelling and saying you are not a good mother will not change the situation. Even if you believe she is yelling to make you angry, it is important not to confirm this feeling by yelling back at her. To do so will only fuel her anger. When she has settled down and is in a more receptive mood to listen, you can discuss with her what it is that might be upsetting her.

3. Which of these statements is true? *d. Just because a particularly strategy worked with me when I was a child does not mean it will be effective with my child.*

We tend to parent the way we were parented. However, the world has changed dramatically in the last twenty-five years. Reward and punishment strategies that may have been effective when we were children may not necessarily be as effective with our children. Many children are likely to challenge some of the limits we set as parents. Also, since every child is different temperamentally from birth, if your children have different temperaments than you do, what worked when you were growing up might not work for them. For

example, if you were a temperamentally easy going child but you have a child who is more strong-willed, it is not likely that your child will immediately comply with your setting limits. While you still have to set limits you may have to build in more choices so that a power struggle is not generated. For example, instead of saying to your child, "It is time to go to bed," you might have to say, "Do you want me to remind you five minutes or ten minutes before it is time to go to bed." While this kind of choice is helpful for all children, it is especially useful for youngsters who are quick to experience requests as impositions. And we must remember that if an approach doesn't work, it makes more sense to change it than continue to use the same ineffective strategy. This does not mean giving in to our children as long as the new approach holds them responsible for their actions.

4. In problem situations between parents and a child, the initial responsibility for change falls upon: *a. Parents*

Some parents believe that it is the responsibility of the child to make the first changes when there is conflict or a problem. They assume that if they make the first changes they might be giving in to the child and that the child will become spoiled. We believe the opposite to be true, namely, that if problematic situations are to improve and if children are to become more accountable, it is typically the parent who must take the initiative. As parents your ability to modify your behavior models flexibility, adaptability, and receptiveness to new ideas and solutions. The goal is for your children to accept increasing responsibility and handle challenges and conflict more effectively as they develop. They will be better able to do so if you have demonstrated this behavior for them. It's important to remember that as you take the initiative in dealing with problem situations your children may not respond favorably at first but if you remain fair and consistent it is likely that your children will be more open to changing their behavior. On the other side of the coin, don't fall into a trap of rescuing your children and not providing them with opportunities to learn how to deal with these situations. It is difficult for children to become responsible if opportunities for such behavior are limited by parental overprotection.

5. Which of the following will help children feel loved, special and appreciated? *d. All of the above.*

There are many opportunities for parents to convey to children that they are loved and appreciated. One of the most powerful messages we can give is that we accept them for who they are. Our children may not always fulfill the expectations or dreams we have for them, but it is important that our love and acceptance not waver. If children constantly feel that they have disappointed their parents, it is difficult for them to develop a more optimistic, hopeful outlook. As parents, we must constantly assess how realistic our expectations are and make modifications when indicated. Love is also communicated by creating traditions and special times with them. Saying to a young child, "When I read to you

each night, it is such a special time that even if the phone rings I won't answer" is but one example of vividly demonstrating your priorities as a parent. Being present at their sporting events or concerts or plays and letting them know how much you enjoy watching them in these activities conveys love. We must avoid losing those precious moments that help our children to feel we really care about them and love them.

6. What is the best way to deal with mistakes? a. *Serve as a model for dealing with mistakes and setbacks.*

Ask yourself what your children observe when you make mistakes. Kids are acutely aware of how parents deal with setbacks and failure. If they witness their parents over-react to mistakes they are more likely to fear mistakes and avoid taking risks. In contrast, if children see their parents respond by remaining calm and seeking more effective solutions, they will be more prone to acting in the same way. Mistakes are a natural part of life for kids and grown-ups. Most mistakes serve as opportunities for learning and parents must model this more positive view if their children are to develop a resilient mindset. We must also avoid the temptation to rush in and protect our children from possible failure or to lower our expectations so that our children are not challenged; if we do so, we rob our children of experiences from which they can discover what they are capable of doing.

7. Your child tells you that he feels ugly and dumb. Your first response should be: b. *"I know you feel that way. I'm not certain why you do but maybe we can figure out what will help you feel better."*

In most situations when we hear our children say negative things about themselves such as that they are ugly and dumb, our first inclination is to quickly support them by telling them that they are not that way at all. However, this kind of support, even if rooted in the best intentions, represents a missed opportunity to validate what our child is telling us and consequently, compromises effective communication. We must remember that validating what our children say does not mean we agree with them, but rather that we understand them. The feeling that one has been heard and validated is a critical component in helping children develop resilience. Thus, a parent might respond to their child's negative statement by saying, "I know you feel ugly and dumb and I'm sorry you do. I don't see it that way and maybe we can figure out what makes you feel that way and what will help you to feel better." This kind of statement is more likely to prompt your child to seek solutions to the negative feelings. Also, if our response is critical such as "no one will like you if you feel that way," our children will be less prone to examine and change their behavior. Finally, we can let them know that it is upsetting when we hear them say negative things about themselves, but our first message should be one of empathy about how they are feeling.

8. Which of these statements are true? d. *Children who are spanked have been found to become more aggressive with other children.*

The true meaning of the word discipline is "to teach." This, the optimal goal is to nurture self-discipline so that

children will act responsibly even when we are not around. Researchers have demonstrated that spanking is not only an ineffective way of helping children develop self-discipline but actually leads them to demonstrate more aggressive behavior towards others. Children who are spanked are taught that the way you solve problems is through hitting. They are robbed of opportunities to find more adaptive ways of behaving and of developing their problem-solving skills. Some parents believe that corporal punishment is an effective way of stopping a child's misbehavior since many children will stop the behavior at that moment. However, it is often a temporary "cure" since the misbehavior persists and, if anything, the child's resentment towards the parent increases. The greater the anger and resentment the less likely the child is to learn from and respect the parent. We believe that parents who spank must seek alternative ways of teaching their children.

9. When your children are successful at a task, you can reinforce a resilient mindset by saying: b. *"It was great to see how you figured that out."*

One of the characteristics of resilient kids is that they relish and take realistic credit for their successes. Their sense of accomplishment and pride gives them the confidence to persevere the next time they face a challenge. Thus, it is important for parents to acknowledge and highlight the ways in which their children contribute to their own success. If you communicate to your children that they could not have been successful without your help, they will develop the mindset that their achievements are not truly their own. If you tell them that since they were successful they should not make excuses for not trying something in the future, you are lessening the sense of accomplishment they feel at that moment; thus, your statement will not be experienced as encouragement but rather as a warning.

10. At an early age it is important for parents to: e. a and b From an early age kids love to be helpful. When we enlist their help we communicate our faith in their ability to handle a variety of tasks and convey our belief that they have something valuable to offer—a feeling that nurtures a sense of responsibility and a resilient mindset. Even when our children are three or four years old, we should say that we need their assistance in certain household responsibilities. Resilience is also reinforced when we help our children to learn how to make choices and decisions in keeping with their developmental level. Children with solid problem-solving skills are not afraid when faced with challenging situations since they have the capacity to figure out what to do. Finally, while time-out is frequently used as a form of discipline, we believe that for most children it is not a major strategy to foster resilience. Actually, the use of time-out with strong-willed children often backfires since they often refuse to comply with their parents request; in such instances, the withdrawal of privileges through the use of logical consequences (i.e., something the parent has control of) is a more effective technique.

10 Ways to Build Resilience³

- 1. Make connections.** Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.
- 2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.
- 3. Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
- 4. Move toward your goals.** Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly -- even if it seems like a small accomplishment -- that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"
- 5. Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.
- 6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality, and heightened appreciation for life.
- 7. Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.
- 8. Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.
- 9. Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.
- 10. Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.

If you see ten troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you. Calvin Coolidge

I have become my own version of an optimist. If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door - or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present. Rabindranath Tagore

³ American Psychological Association

Stress Resources

Understanding Stress & Stress Management:

- Csikszentmihalyi, M, 1991, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, HarperCollins, New York
- Goldberger, L, Breznitz, S (Eds), 1993, *The Handbook of Stress*, Free Press, New York
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- Taylor, S.E., 1999, *Health Psychology* (Fourth Edition), McGraw-Hill, Singapore

Pin-Pointing the Stress in Your Life:

- M E Amundson, C A Hart and T A Holmes, 1986, *Manual for the Schedule of Recent Experience*, University of Washington Press
- Martha Davis, 2000, *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*, New Harbinger, Oakland, California, USA
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Coping With Work Overload:

- Taylor, S.E., 1999, *Health Psychology* (Fourth Edition), McGraw-Hill, Singapore
- Other tools are developed for this site, or are developments based on material at <http://www.mindtools.com>.

Co-Worker and Team Stress:

- J Richard Hackman, 2002, *Leading Teams - Setting the Stage for Great Performances*, Harvard University Press, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
- Nicholson, Nigel, July - August 1998, *How Hardwired is Human Behavior*, Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business School Publishing, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
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- Herbert Benson M.D., 1992 (reissue), *The Relaxation Response*, Harper Collins, New York
- Martha Davis PhD, 2000, *The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook* (Fifth Edition), New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, California

Reducing Stress with Rational Thinking:

- Richard S Lazarus, *Why We Should Think of Stress as a Subset of Emotion*, in the Handbook of Stress (Ed Leo Goldberger and Shlomo Breznitz), 1993, The Free Press, New York, USA
- Bertha Seipp, "Anxiety and Academic Performance, A Meta-analysis", *Anxiety Research* 4,1 (1991), cited in *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman, 1996, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, UK
- Matthew M. Burg Ph.D., *Stress, Behavior, and Heart Disease*, Chapter 8, Yale School of Medicine Heart Book - info.med.yale.edu/library/heartbk
- Dennis Greenberger and Christine Padesky, 1995, *Mind Over Mood*, The Guilford Press, New York, USA

Building Defenses Against Stress:

- Rudolph H Moos and Jeanne A Schaefer, *Coping Resources and Processes: Current Concepts and Measures*, Handbook of Stress (Eds: Leo Goldberger and Shlomo Breznitz), 1993, The Free Press, Toronto, Canada
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- Michael Herbert, *Sleep, Circadian Rhythms and Health*, Cambridge Handbook of Health, Psychology and Medicine (Eds: Baum, Newman et al.), 1997, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK
- Articles from www.mindtools.com

Avoiding Burnout:

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This seminar was presented by:
Eliane S. Herdani, MS, LCPC

Eliane earned her graduate degree in Organizational Counseling and Post Masters in Clinical Counseling from Johns Hopkins University. She is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor providing clients with solution-focused counseling through Employee Assistance Programs and in private practice.

Eliane is also a trainer with LifeWork Strategies and at the Commission for Women Counseling and Career Center. She has conducted more than 200 workshops in the past 6 years on a range of topics, including Assertive Communication, Listening Skills, Team Skills, Goal Setting Techniques, Time Management, and Setting Boundaries.

Eliane has a diverse cultural background and speaks multiple languages, including English, German, Portuguese and Spanish. She is a mother and a resident of Montgomery County.

Life@LifeAspects.com