



Coping with Stress

Being aware of what helps you cope during stressful times will allow you to be able to take care of yourself and to focus on, tune into, and enjoy your child.

Sometimes, the things you do to quiet your baby—rocking her, singing softly to her, bouncing her gently in your arms, dancing with her, telling her “everything will be OK”—will help reduce stress for you too.

Here are some other ideas to try when you need to quiet your stress:



Make a note, doodle:

Putting your feelings on paper can give you relief.



Organize:

Cluttered space can cause stress. Take a few moments to put stray items in their place.



Laugh:

Enjoying a comedy movie, telling a joke, or sharing good times with a friend will remind you that life is good—even when you may be feeling overwhelmed.



Prioritize:

If tasks get pushed back, don't sweat the small stuff.



Dance away:

Sway, stomp, whatever it takes.



Reconnect:

Take a look at your baby's precious little face—when she is calm or asleep.



Recharge:

Enjoy a warm bath or a run or a few pages of a good book or a song you love. Do whatever it is that helps you take a breath and care for yourself.



Managing Your Emotions

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying to help you manage your feelings, so, when those feelings become overwhelming, you can recognize them, cope with them, and get back to being thoughtful and in control:



Be aware that there will be big feelings and this is normal and to be expected.

This is a first step in being able to handle big feelings, so you can be emotionally present, even if you or your partner is thousands of miles away, to support your child. Try to understand what you are feeling and when; this will help you see if you are over-reacting and if your feelings are calling the shots instead of your brain.



Be aware of your comfort zone when it comes to sharing your feelings.

Talking about your feelings can help make them visible to think about and share with others. Some adults are more comfortable and find it easier than others to put their feelings into words. Some are more willing to share. How about you? Is this a skill you may want to practice?



Pause.

Take a moment to think before you react. Being aware of your feelings can allow you to pause and think and respond in a helpful way rather than in an emotional way. When you do this, you help your child begin to learn how to have intense emotions and manage them to solve a problem.



Think about what you are feeling and why.

Perhaps circumstances are overwhelming and your reactions have, therefore, been a little too intense. Consider these examples: maybe you and your child have both had a stomach bug or you have to pay the car mechanic and the plumber in the same week or your partner was out on an unexpected mission and missed your scheduled video call with home. These circumstances could easily make you feel as if you have too much to handle.



Engage the thinking part of your brain to help get your emotions back under your control.

Sometimes, just thinking is enough to help you make the switch.



Talk your feelings over with someone you trust.

It can be clarifying to get another's perspective. So, consider calling or texting a family member, friend, child care director, or your home visitor.



Other ideas?



Having a Conversation When Emotions are Running High

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying when emotions are running high:



Use I-statements to help avoid blaming.

When emotions run high, it can be natural to want to blame someone else for the situation. Using I statements as in, "I feel this is a difficult time" vs. "This is all your fault" invites you to describe how you are feeling or what you need instead of placing blame on your partner or someone else.



Listen.

When your emotions are racing inside it can be hard to quiet yourself and be able to genuinely listen to someone else. Being aware of this can help you take a deep breath (or 2 or 10 breaths) and turn your focus from your feelings to the words someone else is saying.



Try to understand what may be behind your partner's words.

As you have a conversation, questions, such the following, can help you better understand what your partner is telling you: What is she thinking? What is he feeling? What might she be telling me besides what her words say through the sound of her voice, the words she uses, and the expression on her face?



Focus on how to move forward together-

For yourselves and on behalf of your child. For example, talk with the other person about how to make things work more smoothly. There are likely steps both of you can take.



Playback to be sure you both are clear about what was said and agreed upon.

Checking in to be sure you both agree on the path of your conversation will prevent misunderstandings and is a way to promote your partnership and teamwork to move forward together.



Other ideas?
