

Taking Care of Yourself

Taking care of yourself is a huge part of being able to take care of your child, especially when they are behaving in challenging ways. When you are feeling rested and calm, you are able to respond more appropriately. By contrast, when you are feeling stressed, exhausted, or frustrated, you may find it difficult to respond to your child's behaviors in a helpful way. Take steps to practice self-care in your daily routine.

Notice your own feelings and stress level.

Ask yourself these questions, and notice how your body feels:

- How do I know when my stress level is going up? Signs of stress may include muscle soreness, headaches, crying, feeling frustrated, sleeping more or less than normal, eating more or less than normal, and talking more loudly or shouting.
- What is in my control right now? Focus on your reactions, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and needs.
- What do I need right now to feel better? Consider whether a drink of water, a deep breath, a walk outside, a phone call or visit with a friend or family member, or another activity might help you become calmer.

Take a break when you need it.

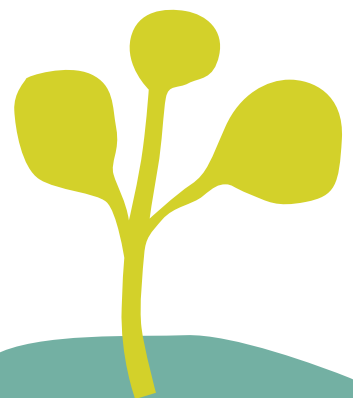
Take a deep breath, count to 20, or leave the room for a moment if your child can stay safe.

Don't expect yourself to be perfect.

Everyone has bad moments sometimes, and that's OK.

Try these ideas for taking care of yourself and reducing stress.

- Get enough sleep.
- Drink water.
- Move your body.
- Find time in the day for breaks.
- Listen to music.
- Talk to friends and family.
- Write in a journal.
- Reward yourself for a job well done.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Get outside.
- Notice what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.



Strategies to Try

Make self-care a priority.

Instead of: “I don’t have time to take care of myself.”

Try: “I am important, and I need to put myself first sometimes. Doing this makes me a better parent.”

Focus on what is in your control.

Instead of: “He is not cooperating! I know he will throw a tantrum next, and we will be late again.”

Try: “I know I am very upset now. I feel the stress climbing up. What do I need?”

Challenge unhelpful thinking.

Instead of: “I should be able to stop this tantrum. I am a horrible parent.”

Try: “A deep breath will help. I am doing my best. There is no better parent for my child than me.”

Look for support for yourself.

Instead of: “I don’t have time to talk with my friends and family.”

Try: “I will make time to connect with the people who love and understand me.”

Practice gratitude.

Instead of: Focusing on what is not going well.

Try: Noticing what is going well. Each day, write down one thing you are grateful for.

Keep it fresh!

In addition to: Trying the same self-care ideas over and over again.

Try: A new self-care idea. Notice how it makes you feel.

Resources

- [Help Us Stay Calm: Strategies that Help You and Your Child During Challenging Behavior](#)
- [Reducing Stress](#)



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