

## Parenting Stress - How do you Deal?

You just woke up, and your two year old is screaming because they missed part of Sesame Street, your baby is crying because he's hungry, and your husband seems completely baffled by what to do. You rip through the house, quickly popping a tape in the VCR for your two year old, make a bottle for the baby, and snap at your husband for just standing there. How can he be so confused when you are on top of everything? However, inside, you feel burdened with the "super mom" ideal. This isn't what you bargained for. You don't enjoy this the way everyone seemed to say you would. You feel like you do everything and that you can't relate to your children, that even your husband is standing idly by while you slowly go insane. You are no Super Mom, you feel like a Super Failure. You are suffering from normal parenting stress.

Often when women have babies, they think that they are going to be experiencing the best time of their lives. However, a certain amount of women do end up feeling like they got way more than they bargained for. Women everywhere are afraid to admit that they feel stressed and inadequate as mothers, but the fact remains that it happens. Every parent feels stress, but for some women, it's just too much.

If you are feeling particularly depressed and stressed out, and you recently had a baby, call your doctor or midwife right away. You may be suffering from Post Partum Depression, which is a common reaction to hormones and normal stresses of having a baby. Women who are prone to depression are particularly prone to have Post Partum Depression, but it can happen to anyone. If you feel overwhelmed or like you can't handle being a new mom, please do not be afraid to call someone and talk to them. You can get help, and you can feel better, enough to care not only for your children but for yourself. Options for post partum depressed mothers include:

\* **Antidepressants are available for post partum depression.** Even if you are breastfeeding, there are plenty of antidepressants which can be used to make yourself feel better. Particular medications do not even pass into the breast milk, but make sure that you tell your doctor that you are breastfeeding so they can pick the appropriate medication for you!

\* **Therapy.** Therapy is a good, healthy way to help ease your stress and depression as a parent. A therapist can help you with coping skills, positive self-talk and other techniques to help you feel better. Additionally, it's nice to have someone to talk to that's there just for you!

\* **Support Groups.** There are support groups specifically for new mothers who have post partum depression. Talk to your doctor or midwife, call your local hospital, and research on the internet. You can talk to other mothers who feel the same way, and help you realize that you aren't alone!

**\* As strange as it sounds, sleeping when your baby sleeps is fantastic advice!**

Trying to stay awake to get things done when your baby is sleeping is a grand gesture, but taking care of yourself is even better. Take that nap, and enjoy the time you have to sleep! The dishes will get done eventually. Don't pressure yourself too much!

Taking post partum depression seriously is very important. If you think you are suffering from this, do not assume that you can "tough it out." For your children's sake and for your own, seek help as soon as you can!

Perhaps you didn't just have a baby, but the kids are driving you crazy anyway. You don't know how you are going to endure all 18 years of them living at home! Here are some techniques to try to make your family life a little bit more peaceful, or at least, make yourself feel better:

**\* Take time for yourself.** This is very important. As mothers, we often think that our whole lives completely surround our family, and behave as martyrs, basically, without taking time for our needs. This is not something that should be happening! Yes, your family is important, but so are you! Spoil yourself, even if it's just a little. Take time to read a favorite book, take a warm bubble bath, enjoy a treat, garden, exercise, or go out for a cup of coffee! It doesn't have to be much, but as long as you are doing something for yourself, you will feel better. Even if it's taking a class at the local community college about a subject that interests you! You can take anything from creative writing to dancing, or even piano lessons!

**\* Try not to use negative labels for your kids.** If you try to take a positive spin on your child's attitudes and personality instead of concentrating on the negative side of it, your kids will catch on and act more positive, as well. If you usually call your child "stubborn" you could perhaps call them "persistent" instead. Make sure that other adults also hear your new attitude towards your kids, and they will catch on as well!

**\* Don't feel guilty about letting your kids watch a movie while you clean the kitchen or curl up in a chair reading a book.**

**\* Make up creative projects that you and your kids can do together!** A creative project that everyone has fun doing and can be proud of is a great way to take up part of the day with less stress, especially when your kids get bored having nothing much to do.

**\* See if there is a mother's group in your area.** Parenting groups often have play dates where kids of the same age can play together, and you would have a chance to talk to other moms who are going through the same things that you are. It's a wonderful way to pick up ideas and share frustrations. Who knows better about what you are going through than other parents with children the same age?

**\* Check your local college for parent/toddler classes.** Often there are classes available where you can bring your toddler to play with other toddlers, and learn some

aspects and parenting tips that you may not have thought of before! This can be fun for you and your toddler, and a good learning experience as well.

\* **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Dad should help as well. If you are a stay at home mom, you know that it's a 24-hour a day, 7-day a week job. Ask your husband to watch the kids while you take a nice bath or go to the store.

\* **Want the kids to help you with chores?** Instead of yelling at them to get them to do what you want, try making chores into a game. For instance, if you want your child to pick up a pile of books on the floor, pick some up and challenge your child to assist you. If your kids think cleaning is fun, they will probably be more likely to want to help you, which will help ease your stress!

\* **Therapy is still a good idea.** Not only does it help to take time to talk to someone once a week or once a month, you can also learn coping techniques for yourself and for working with your kids. There is also a type of therapy where you can bring your kids with you and work together towards a goal. Call or talk to your insurance company and/or therapist to learn what would be the best technique for you!

\* **Obtain a hobby, with or without the kids.** Learn something new! Enriching your own life with education and enjoyment is a wonderful technique for reducing stress. You can still live a full life as a parent, and whether you choose to have a hobby only for yourself or one that includes the whole family, you won't regret taking the time to learn something new!

These are all techniques to help you get in control as a mother and as a person. Often mothers forget their individuality as a person when becoming a parent, and end up feeling resentful because they can only define themselves as mothers. Taking the time to identify with your inner self is incredibly important, and even more so as a parent. Even though you are working at the most important job in the world, and even though it's a job that never ends, taking care of yourself is always important! Stress is a normal part of life, as well, but if you feel overwhelmed and as if you can't stand to be a parent any longer, call a professional and be sure to get some help! Everyone needs help sometimes, so don't be afraid to ask! If you are just feeling stress about parenting and want to help ease it, then try some of the advice given in this article, and you will notice an improvement over a short period of time!