

# Parents

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## Take Care of Yourself

- **Be active.** Being active helps your body stay healthy. It also helps you deal with stress. Enjoy physical activities with your child.
- **Eat well.** Your child learns from your example. If you eat nourishing foods, like fruits and vegetables, she will want them too. Both of you will stay healthy.
- **Get enough rest.** Take time to be alone, even for just a few minutes, every day. Rest when your child naps. If you have a baby who wakes at night, go to bed early. Try to get enough sleep at night.
- **Keep your relationship strong.** All parents need to meet their needs for love and sex. It takes time, energy, care, and love to build a healthy relationship with your partner. It is worth it for you and for your child.
- **Stay interested.** Parents need a chance to get together with other adults to talk. Take your child to places where you will meet other parents. You and your child can learn and do new things. You can both make new friends too.
- **Have fun.** Having fun is part of looking after yourself. Play with your child and laugh together. Have fun with your partner and with friends too.

**i** Parents take better care of their child when they take care of themselves too.



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# Fun & Easy Activities

## Get Active with Your Child

You don't have to join the gym to get exercise. You can just go out for a walk with your baby in a stroller or a baby carrier. You will have more fun if you have company. Look for another parent who has a baby the same age. Make a regular date to go walking together.

When your child is older, you can pretend to be in a marching band. Pretend to play an instrument while you march from room to room. Make the noise of your pretend instrument. Your child will imitate you. When he gets tired of beating the drum, you can pretend to play the trumpet.

Try doing stretching exercises with your preschooler. Look for a video to borrow from the library or find an exercise program on TV. Have fun doing the movements together.

## Laugh Time

Laughter will help make you feel better. Make a list of what makes you laugh and plan a "laugh time" every day.

Here are some ideas to try with your child, with friends, or on your own.

- Play games where you repeat rhymes with gestures. Move your baby's hands as you say the rhyme. In some rhymes, you say the name of parts of her body while you touch them. Soon she will start to laugh before you get to the end.
- Make silly faces and imitate animal noises to get your toddler laughing.
- Make up silly songs with your preschooler and sing them together.
- Get together for fun with a friend.
- See a funny movie.
- Watch a funny TV show.
- Read the comics or a funny book.



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## Feeling Good About Yourself

- **Build self-esteem.** Self-esteem is the feeling you have inside that says you are a good person. Part of your job as a parent is to build your child's self-esteem. You help her to feel safe, secure, loved, and understood.
  - What about you? What can you do that will help you feel safe, secure, loved, and understood too?
  - **Be good to yourself.** When you take care of yourself, you show your child that you deserve respect. Your child will learn to respect herself too. Try to do something nice for yourself every day. You deserve it.
  - **Connect with your cultural traditions.** Talk to your child about things in your culture that are very important to you, like values, beliefs, traditions, and practices.
  - You do not have to give up your cultural beliefs just because they are different from the people around you. Your child needs to know where he came from, as well as where he is today.
  - **Trust your judgment.** There will always be people who think that the way you are being a parent is wrong. The important thing is what do **YOU** think? Ask for advice from people you like and trust. Ignore the others.
  - **Expect others to respect you.** A child learns how to behave by watching how her parents treat each other. If parents respect each other, then their child will learn to respect others.
- i Don't worry about being perfect. Feel good about doing your best.**



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## Cook a Family Recipe

Do you remember special foods that you ate when you were growing up? Did you eat certain dishes at special times of the year? Share your memories with your child and make the special dishes with him. Even young children can help you cook. If you measure the ingredient, they can pour it into a bowl. Older children are strong enough to stir.

While you are making the recipe together, talk about your childhood memories. Enjoy eating your special dish together.

Make sure your child is safe while you are cooking. He may be safest sitting in his high chair. He will be up at your level. Keep him away from sharp utensils and hot surfaces.

## Give Yourself a Compliment

After your child has gone to bed, take a moment to think about something you did well with your child during the day.

Write a few words in a notebook about your success. Read your notebook when you want to feel good about being a parent. Your notes will remind you of all the things you're doing well.

## Good Time Nuggets

When you are putting your child to bed, ask her to think of three good things that happened during the day. Encourage her to think of small things. Did she like what she had for lunch? Did she enjoy playing with a friend? Did she have fun making a snowman with you? You can add your own happy times too.

If you want, write a few words about each happy time on a piece of paper. Fold the papers up and put them in a box. You and your child can decorate the box with ribbons and coloured paper. If your child says, "Nothing good ever happens to me!" pull some papers out of the box and read the good time nuggets.

Before long, positive thinking will become a habit for both you and your child.



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## Your Feelings after Your Baby is Born

**Most new mothers will have “baby blues.”** Baby blues are normal. Mothers experience physical, emotional, and hormonal changes after having a baby. You might feel restless and tense, sad and teary, or overwhelmed.

The baby blues should pass within a few weeks after having your baby. They will pass more easily if you take care of yourself.


Eat well and get as much sleep as you can. Try not to be hard on yourself. Ask for help when you need it. Look for advice from your health care provider.

**Some mothers will have postpartum depression.** Sometimes the “baby blues” do not go away. The feelings become more serious. Dads can become depressed after the baby is born as well.

**Talk to a health care provider if:**

- Your symptoms do not seem to be going away within a few weeks after the birth.
- You have been depressed in the past.
- Your symptoms started while you are pregnant.

If you are a parent with postpartum depression, it is important that you take care of yourself. Reach out to your partner, friends and family for help. Get counselling. Consider medication if your healthcare provider thinks this is right for you.

 **Postpartum depression is REAL. There is help available and you can get better.**



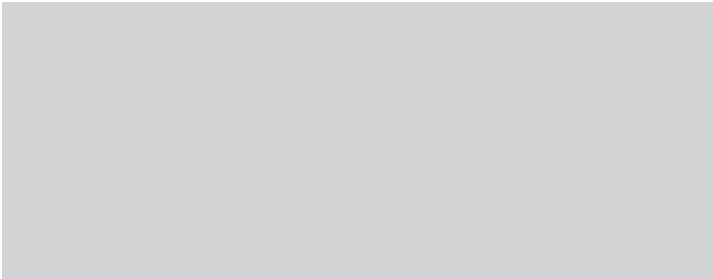
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## Handling Stress

**Parents sometimes feel stressed.** Any change in your life can cause stress. The situation you are in can be stressful, too. Stress becomes a problem when you feel like you have too much to deal with. Maybe you feel that life is getting out of control.

**You may have physical, mental or emotional signs of stress.** Pay attention to them and look after yourself. Find someone to talk to. Ask for help from friends or professionals.

**Anger is one way that many people react to stress.** Everyone gets angry sometimes. Remember that anger is a feeling. You cannot help what you feel. But you can help what you **do** about your anger. Being angry is **never** an excuse for hurting someone.

Look for help if you have trouble handling your anger, get angry too often, or are afraid you might hurt your child.

### Positive coping tools to handle stress

- Talking with friends and family
- Asking for help
- Eating well
- Getting exercise
- Getting enough rest
- Talking to a counsellor

### Coping tools that can cause problems

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Gambling
- Spending lots of time on the Internet and playing video games



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- **Many people get sad when they are under a lot of stress.** It is stressful when unhappy things happen in your life. You can help yourself move past your sad feelings, or keep them from getting worse, by doing things to look after yourself. Talk to a friend. Do something you enjoy.
- With love and support from people we care about, most of us are able to work through sad feelings and feel better.

- **Many Canadians experience depression sometime in their lives.** Sometimes, nothing you do seems to make you feel better. You still feel helpless and hopeless. You do not care very much about anything. If you do nothing, depression like this may get worse.
- Depression can be helped with counselling and medicine. Look for professional help.
- **It is very important for you and for your child that you get the help you need.**

**i** **Be an example to your child. Choose positive tools to handle your stress.**





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## Make Life Easier for Yourself

- **Decide what is most important.** People are more important than things. It is always important to cuddle, play, and talk with your child.
- **Tidy is more important than clean.** No one will see the dust on the woodwork, but toys all over the floor are dangerous. Put the toys into a box and put the box in a corner. The room will look much better, you will feel good about it, and it will only take a few minutes.
- **Be as organized as you can.** Every day, make a list of what you have to do. This could include planning meals, cleaning, errands, appointments, and anything else you need to get done that day.
- **Work out ways to get things done quickly and easily.** There are ways to save time and energy. For example, prepare enough stew for two meals then freeze half for another day. Do as much as you can by phone or online.
- **Share the work.** You do not have to do everything on your own. Share the work with your partner, if possible. Ask for help from friends and family members. Ask a neighbour or a friend to watch your child for an hour or so while you take a break. Maybe you can watch her child in return or do some other favour.
- **Prepare for problems BEFORE they happen.** Problems will seem smaller if you've already figured out how to handle them. What will you do if your child has a fever? Or if your babysitter gets sick?

**i** Give yourself credit for what you do. Do not feel guilty about what you do not get done.



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## What Can Wait?

### IS THIS A MUST DO JOB OR A SHOULD DO JOB?

When you feel you have too much to do, take a break and make a list. Write down all the jobs that you think you need to do. Decide whether each job is a must do job or a should do job. Work on the must do jobs first. You do not have to think about the should do jobs right away. They can wait.

#### Examples of must do jobs:

- Feed your child.
- Take care of a sick child.
- Get some rest and exercise.
- Pay your bills.
- Make sure your child goes to school or daycare.

#### Examples of should do jobs:

- Clean the floor.
- Do laundry.
- Clean the bathroom.
- Mow the lawn.

You cannot delay should do jobs forever. If you have no more clean clothes to wear, doing laundry is a must do job! Ask yourself: "Will something bad happen if I don't do this job?" If the answer is yes, then this is a **must do** job.

Spend your time doing **must do** jobs and having fun with your family and friends.

## What Can You Get Help With?

### Look to your community.

Help and support from neighbours, friends, and family can make many problems easier to handle. Stay connected to your family and friends. Reach out to other people.

- Buy and cook food as a group or use a community kitchen program.
- Arrange a car pool.
- Join a babysitting co-op. In a co-op, parents trade babysitting time instead of paying for it.

