

Take Care of Yourself!

Families and others who care for children often experience significant stress, whether it's the normal stress of being responsible for many things at once (job, family, multiple children, household chores, etc.), seasonal stress (holidays, winter blues), or significant stress due to family crises, military deployment, financial problems, etc. While we know that some stress is a normal part of being human and is even healthy, we also know that when parents and caregivers experience a lot of stress, it has a negative impact on the children in their care. Parental and caregiver stress levels can cause immediate behavior problems as well as longer-term mental health issues, so taking care of ourselves and managing stress is very important.

Symptoms of excessive stress

- Memory problems and inability to concentrate
- Feelings of being overwhelmed with daily tasks
- Extreme irritability



- Frequent colds or other illness, including nausea and headaches
- Inability to relax and difficulty sleeping
- Alcohol and substance, overeating, loss of appetite

Tips on taking care of yourself

- Identify the specific things that cause the most stress so you are prepared to handle it when it comes.

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- Be aware of, and try to change unhelpful ways of thinking, such as either-or thinking, overgeneralizing, jumping to conclusions, thinking the worst, or blaming yourself.
- Maintain your physical health by eating well, drinking plenty of water, and exercising regularly.
- Make time to relax doing something you enjoy, such as taking a bath, reading, or walking (build it into your schedule and be intentional!).
- Stick to routines with children for nap time, mealtime, etc.
- Learn techniques for staying calm; breathe deeply.
- Ask for help from other family members and maintain friendships; connect with support groups in your community.

R E S O U R C E S

Resources for Parents. Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Children/Pages/parent-resources.aspx>

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance. www.pa-fsa.org/

Taking Care of Ourselves. Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. <http://bit.ly/2nanU0Z>

The Importance of Caring for Yourself During Periods of Military-Related Stress. Zero to Three. <http://bit.ly/2l3DPNV>

How Parents' Stress Can Hurt A Child, From The Inside Out. Forbes. Jul 25, 2012. <http://bit.ly/2mHjGh2>

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at PAIECMH@pakeys.org with questions or concerns.

