



## Series #3: Caregiver Support

# Tips for Tots



### Tip #2:

## Supportive Ways to Manage Caregiver Stress

### Strategies

#### Did you know?

Caregivers often love the work they do. However, child care is a highly demanding profession. It is important for caregivers to take care of themselves. One way is to understand stress, its impact and how to manage it in healthy ways. Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. Stress can be harmful or helpful. Stress in small doses can actually be beneficial. Stress due to an upcoming site visit may encourage improved performance. Stress felt before a public presentation may promote better preparation. Stress can release adrenaline which increases heart rate and metabolism and it can increase levels of cortisone providing more energy, focus and better problem solving. Stress is also present in life's joyful events. A birth, a wedding, a move, a job change, can all involve stress. Stress can be a motivator, helping us focus and increasing our physical performance and endurance. Stress experienced for long periods of time, however can negatively impact many aspects of life. Constant stress can impair health. It can adversely affect the way we think and can influence our ability to focus, reason and problem solve. Stress can affect those around us especially children who tend to be attuned to the emotions of their caregivers. Excessive stress, if not effectively addressed can lead to serious health problems, anxiety and even depression. Managing stress requires that we understand how we can cope with it. It also means that we seek help when things become overwhelming and beyond our ability to manage.

- Start a Stress Journal. Write down what caused the stress, your feelings, your response, and what made you feel better. Look for patterns to emerge. Try to identify your regular stressors.
- Think about how you can reduce stress in your life. Do you need fewer commitments? Do you need to make some changes?
- Reduce "all-or-nothing" thinking. Evaluate a situation on a scale of 0-10. Challenge your unhelpful thoughts.
- Be as kind to yourself as you would be to a friend. Practice positive affirmations; remind yourself-you are wonderful! Review the day's events; focus on the positive things. Remind yourself that negative situations do not last forever.
- If stress is too overwhelming you may need extra support, consider seeking help from a health provider or a counselor.
- Take care of yourself. Manage your diet, exercise, and sleep to stay healthy. Stay connected to friends and loved ones. Stress will be more manageable with good health and caring supports.
- Practice deep breathing exercises. Let out a big sigh, dropping your chest, and exhaling. Close your eyes. Imagine a deflated balloon in your stomach. Take a deep breath in through your nose and picture the balloon inflating. Hold for a few seconds. Exhale through your mouth, sighing again as you drop your chest.
- Make time for relaxation. Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule.
- Practice being happy. Your choices, thoughts, and actions influence your level of happiness. Try to do something that you enjoy every day.
- Make stress work for you. Use it to motivate and prepare you for the challenges in your life.

#### Resources:

<http://www.ecmhc.org/relaxation.html>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management>

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